CoalSpeak • The Year 2000 Appalachian Poetry Competition Winners • How to Pronounce *Appalachia*

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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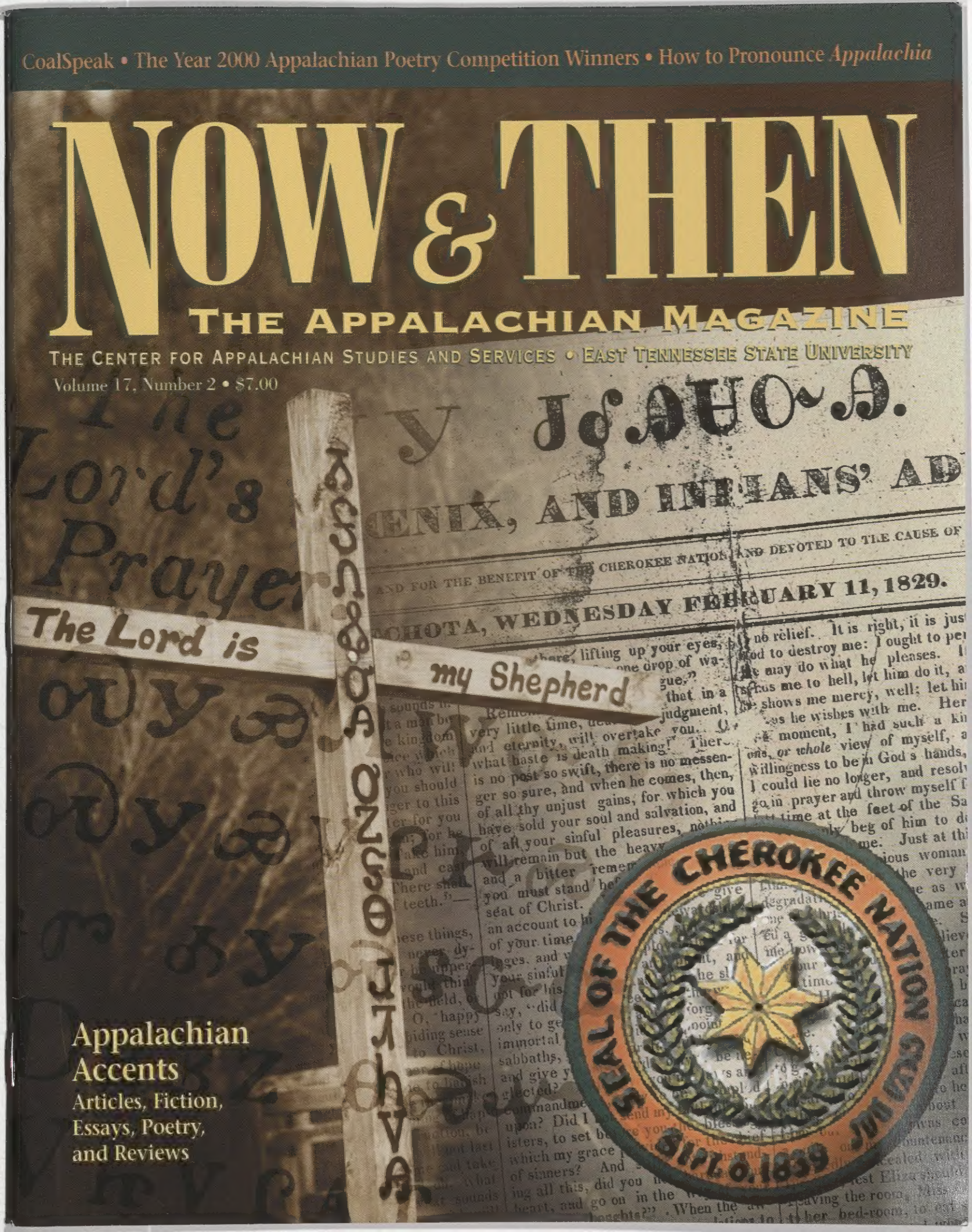
The Lord's Prayer
The Lord is my Shepherd
CHEROKEE PHOENIX, AND INDIANS' ADVOCATE
AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHEROKEE NATION AND DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF
CHOTA, WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11, 1829.
SEAL OF THE CHEROKEE NATION
SEPT. 6, 1839

Appalachian Accents

Articles, Fiction, Essays, Poetry, and Reviews

My Grandmother's Language

In my grandmother's language
there was no word for sex.
Cows were playful in season,
too many bucks on the road,
quail paired off in spring,
she's ripe as a plum,
don't do nothing foolish.

She never said work, but some things
always needed tending, the ox was
in the ditch, it's going to rain tomorrow,
make hay, put food on the table.
Idle hands, my grandmother scolded.
Nobody got tired either, but plumb tuckered,
asleep in his supper, stiff-jointed, plow-weary.

A skunk was a polecat, a pig was a shoat,
snakes were adders, and a panther was a painter.
No one ever heard of a metal detector
with some middle-age retiree
searching beneath local baseball
bleachers for pocket change.
But there was real buried treasure,
Confederate gold on Johnson Hill,
family silver in McDonald's orchard,
and soil, if treated right, rich enough to yield.

There was no Voodoo, but haints were
bad spirits, and good ghosts hovered
over the Primitive Baptist Cemetery,
billowing lights which were omens.
And in the undertow of sleep,
fingers were lost breaking sod,
skulls cracked by stubborn mules,
hands crushed by the crank of chains,
arms nubbed at the sawmill, and children
drowned, snake bit or lured into
Dark Hollow alone.

In my grandmother's language there was
no word for handout, but people practiced
common decency. Neighbors were welcome
to share a table, no matter how sparse
the larder. Guests ate first and, during hard luck,
community stock shared community feed.
The words help and hope were the same.
"Can I hope you?" my grandmother asked
to friends and strangers alike.

—Bill Brown

Bill Brown's paper, "A Gathering of Light: The Gift of Landscape in the Poetry of George Scarbrough," which he read at the 1999 Literary Festival at Emory and Henry College in Emory, Va., will be published in the 2000 issue of Iron Mountain. *He received a Literary Fellowship in Poetry from the Tennessee Arts Commission for 1998-1999. Brown has had poetry published in many magazines, and his new teacher textbook,* Centering the Poem, *is forthcoming from Calendar Islands Books, Portland, Maine.*

Cover collage illustration by Jon Hounsell of Hillhouse Graphic Design, Kingsport, Tenn. The collage uses a photograph by Ken Murray, the seal of the Cherokee Nation, and examples of the Cherokee Syllabary provided by the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in Cherokee, N.C.

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NOW & THEN
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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"One of the unrecognized stories about mountain language is its novelty and inventiveness, not its antiquity."
—Michael Montgomery

ARTICLES
7 Myths: How a Hunger for Roots Shapes Our Notions About Appalachian English *Michael Montgomery*
14 Speaking the 'Speak *Christine M. Goldbeck*
20 To 'Speak or Not to 'Speak *Christine M. Goldbeck*
25 On the Pronunciation of *Appalachia* *Anita Puckett*
35 Hanging in the Balance: The Fate of the Cherokee Language in the 21st Century *Barbara R. Duncan and James "Bo" Taylor*

ESSAYS
22 Did You'uns Hear *That?* A Pokeful of Notes on Accent *Bill Dockery*
29 Can't Pronounce *Appalachia?* Then Don't Mess With Us *Amy Clark*
41 A Clear Connection *Anya E. Liftig*
45 Two-Ton Treadway's Reign of Terror *Virginia L. McCurry*

FICTION
17 Proud to be American *Christine M. Goldbeck*
31 The Hard Girl *Kathy L. May*

POETRY
◁ My Grandmother's Language *Bill Brown*
2 Aspiration *Lynn Powell*
3 The Year 2000 Appalachian Poetry Competition Winners
4 Approaching Chester, Ohio *Cathy Lentes*
5 Pivot *Dory L. Hudspeth*
6 Steam *G.C. Waldrep*
13 Songcatcher *A. Jane Hicks*
21 Immaculate Morning *Robert Carl Williams*
34 Papaw Doesn't Speak Much *Wesley Blalock*
40 Kain-tuck *Ken Goosens*
48 Longing for a Kentucky Voice *Noel Smith*
49 Along the Widow's Fence *Charlotte Pence*
53 Beekeeper *John Crutchfield*

REVIEWS
49 *Smoky Mountain Voices: A Lexicon of Southern Appalachian Speech* *Linda Behrend*
edited by Harold F. Farwell Jr. and J. Karl Nicholas
49 *Orville Hicks: Mule Egg Seller & Appalachian Storyteller* *Elizabeth C. Fine*
produced by Orville Hicks and Thomas McGowan
50 *Jane Hicks Gentry: A Singer Among Singers* *Thomas McGowan*
by Betty N. Smith
51 *Books Worth Mentioning* *Sandra L. Ballard*
52 *Creeker: A Woman's Journey* *Winifred Hazucha*
by Linda Scott DeRosier

Mother Tongues

During part of my childhood, I spent each and every Saturday morning sitting at a long table in an old house listening to some poor volunteer trying to teach me Ukrainian. I sat there — with my father's more or less Scotch-Irish features and an exotic middle name (Xenia) inherited from my Ukrainian maternal grandmother — sounding out the Cyrillic alphabet, fervently wishing I was home watching cartoons.

But it was important to my mother and other members of this Ukrainian-American community that we children melted only so far into the mainstream. If we became fluent in the language, they reasoned, it would increase the odds that we would help keep Ukrainian culture alive in their adopted homeland. After all, we'd know the secret code.

No one needed to tell the federal government how important perpetuating a language is if you're trying to preserve a culture. It knew enough to punish children for speaking their native tongue in U.S. government-run Indian boarding schools. And today's Cherokee, working hard on several fronts to resuscitate their mother tongue, certainly understand that language is, as Rev. Robert Bushyhead observes in Barbara Duncan and James "Bo" Taylor's "Hanging in the Balance" (p. 35), "what makes us Cherokee."

Even the particular strain of English we use can speak volumes, rightly or wrongly, about who we are or would like to be, where we've come from, and where we've journeyed. In "Speaking the 'Speak" (p. 14), Christine Goldbeck shows how in Pennsylvania's eastern coalfields, you can trace the history of hard-working ancestors (such as my maternal grandfather) who came from all over Europe to work in the mines, where their languages met and mingled and created new words to fit their underground world. Certainly essayist Amy Clark ("Can't Pronounce *Appalachia?,"* p. 30) can probably cite numerous instances of people jumping to very wrong conclusions about her intelligence as soon as they hear the twang of her East Tennessee accent. And Anita Puckett in "On the Pronunciation of *Appalachia"* (p. 25) points out how outsiders who say *Appalachia* with a long a sound in the third syllable in the region's central and southern parts are communicating more to their listeners than they'd ever dreamt.

It is ironic, but probably inevitable, that language, the facility that allows us to connect with our fellow human beings by sharing what's in our minds and souls, is also a way we construct boundaries and accentuate our differences. At times, we crave those differences. In "Myths" (p. 7), Michael Montgomery shows how outsiders often view mountain speech as far more quaint, static, and exotic than it actually is because they need to believe that "mountain culture preserves what the rest of the country has lost."

On the other hand, different language styles can cause us to avoid others because, as Bill Dockery points out in "Did You'uns Hear *That?"* (p. 22), we're afraid we won't be able to understand them. Or worse, we deride or reject others because their views about acceptable language or their accents don't match our own, as Virginia McCurry ("Two-Ton Treadway," p. 45) and Kathy May ("The Hard Girl," p. 31) show. Still, as the bilingual world of my childhood inspired me to ponder early and often, language is a mysterious, amazing gift.

I never did learn Ukrainian. Well, actually, I did master a single sentence which I'm told I deliver with a credible accent and reasonably good pronunciation. It translates as "I don't know Ukrainian." I used it in self-defense whenever someone initiated a conversation doomed to be one-sided since I only understood a stray word or two. And while my grandparents' ethnicity forms part of my heritage, it certainly doesn't exist anywhere near the core of my personal identity. Like Anya Liftig ("A Clear Connection," p. 41), I tried to live in the two very different worlds of my mother and father. I failed. All those hours of instruction simply couldn't overcome my mixed parentage or the fact that I could never seem to muster a devotion to a "homeland" I'd never seen.

With this issue, we bid a very fond farewell to Sandra Ballard, *Now & Then's* first reviews editor. Since 1995, Sandy has been gathering reviews together of books, films, and recordings about the region with diligence and calm good humor. Fortunately, she will not be too far away. This summer, she takes Jerry Williamson's place as editor of the *Appalachian Journal,* published by her alma mater, Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. I anticipate many phone calls in the future as we trade war stories and try to help each other produce publications that serve Appalachia, each in its own way.

— Jane Harris Woodside, editor

Aspiration

Further south they call it *hog jowl.*
Up north they call it *salt pork.*
But we called it *streakéd meat—*

the one Elizabethan elegance
in a lexicon of *liberries, chimbleys,*
y'alls, might coulds, and *sherberts.*

On New Year's Day, my mother would slice it ten times
the thickness of bacon, the salt in one slice
enough to make a mouth shrivel for days.

Far away, others were igniting sauces,
shaping the daily tortilla or boiling
mussels from the river in coconut milk...

but we were counting on a mess
of black-eyed peas, a fried slab of pig fat,
and the charm of a name, perfected.

— Lynn Powell

Lynn Powell's book of poetry, Old & New Testaments, *published by University of Wisconsin Press, won the 1995 Brittingham Prize in Poetry and the 1996 Great Lakes Colleges Association's New Writers Award. Powell currently lives in Oberlin, Ohio.*

YEAR 2000

APPALACHIAN POETRY COMPETITION

As usual, we're delighted to report, we have inspired soul-searching and confusion in our final judge. For the Year 2000 edition of *Now & Then's* Poetry Competition, the judge in question was poet Maggie Anderson, coordinator of Kent State University's Wick Poetry Program and author of *Windfall: New and Selected Poems.* "Gee," she wrote in her cover letter, "what a strong group of poems you sent me to look at! I've taken several weeks to make my final choices because I kept switching around. I chose the three I did," she explained, "because they seemed to me the most intriguing in sound, image and story and because they moved around in a small space — and were also moving in the emotional sense."

This year, 111 poets from 16 states and Scotland sent in 227 poems for consideration. Entries had to be written either by someone who had lived in Appalachia at some point in his or her life or they had to be about the region.

We wish to thank Connie Jordan Green, *Now & Then* poetry editor Linda Parsons Marion, Glenn McKee, and Ron Rash who screened the poems. Each entry was read by two individuals. And of course the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services wishes to thank our sponsors. Baker Donelson Bearman & Caldwell, Johnson City, Tenn., donated the funds for first prize. In addition The University of Virginia's College at Wise and East Tennessee State University's English department, Johnson City, Tenn., have both agreed to become underwriters for second and third prizes, respectively, for all future *Now & Then* poetry competitions. The next poetry contest is scheduled for the spring of 2002.

FIRST PRIZE

SPONSOR:

Cathy Lentes

Baker Donelson Bearman & Caldwell, Johnson City, Tenn.

Some 13 years ago, Cathy Lentes and her husband, John, were living a frenzied life in Cleveland. She was teaching first grade and caring for their first child while her attorney husband held down two jobs. A friend from Appalachian Ohio called and mentioned that a law firm in Pomeroy had an opening. They went down to the southeast corner of the state on a whim and fell in love. "We just kind of left the city, picked up, and came down to the Ohio River area and never looked back," says Lentes.

Today, she lives with her husband and three children in a late 19th century farmhouse surrounded by 60 acres of woods. It's located near the little town of Rutland, Ohio, in sparsely populated Meigs County in the big bend area of the Ohio River. "So there are more trees and cows here than there are people," she laughs.

She mainly spends her time these days "being a good Mom" and working on her writing. Currently assembling a collection of her work about Southeast Ohio, she has had her poetry appear in various journals, such as *Blueline, Appalachian Heritage, Riverwind, Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel,* and *Nexus.* In 1994, the Antioch Writers Workshop in Yellow Springs, Ohio, awarded her the Judson Jerome scholarship, and in 1997, she earned a writer's residency at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vt. Back in 1998, she earned an honorable mention for "Volunteers" in *Now & Then's* poetry competition.

Both Lentes and her husband share a love of history, a love that suffuses her prize-winning poem, "Approaching Chester, Ohio." The poem was written last fall as Lentes and her family were coming back on Route 7 from a day trip just across the river in West Virginia. At

Paul Gerard

Cathy Lentes

sunset, they found themselves near Chester, an old pioneer town laid out around a common green like the New England towns from which many of its early settlers came. "As you're coming into Chester, you come across these flat plains

with rolling hills along the side," Lentes explains. "The schoolhouse and Chester Courthouse — which was built back in 1822 and is actually the oldest courthouse in the state of Ohio — is way up on this hill above the rest of the town.

"I experienced this sense of almost a warp in time that I feel quite often in this area, with its deep sense of history. I was thinking about all the other people who had gone before us, traveled this road, and had seen the same courthouse up on the hill. I was just thinking about coming home — though this isn't home for me since, even after 13 years, we're still outsiders because our people are not from this area. Still, it feels like home. And I am interested in that sense of homecoming. It seems to be a theme I come to a lot in my writing."

What strikes Lentes as most distinctive about the way language is used in her adopted home is the way stories are told. "It's a more ambling way of expressing things," she says. "Everybody's got a story to tell, and I think that I notice this more in this area than in any other place I've lived in Ohio. You know, people are more willing to have extended conversations and tell you their family story or their history, and I find that really interesting."

In her spare time, Lentes conducts journaling workshops for women as part of a victims' assistance program overseen by her husband, now the county prosecutor. In these workshops, Lentes hopes to give the women a chance to express themselves so they can think about how to change their lives and go on. She also goes into elementary and middle schools to do special writing programs. Despite Appalachian Ohio's strong proclivity for storytelling, she finds she has to convince the children in this mining area that they can find plenty to write about in their own backyards. "A lot of them tend to feel that writers live elsewhere and do other things, and that you can't write about right where you are."

Through her work not only in the classroom but on the pages of many publications, Lentes proves that Appalachian Ohio is perfectly capable of inspiring art that can speak to people everywhere.

— JHW

Approaching Chester, Ohio

Last night the sky ignited;
November trees blazed up
match-struck by the setting sun.
High on the hill, the old courthouse
windows flamed, then flickered
as if lit by candle glow.
Time curled back—
suddenly horses' hooves
clattered on hardened ground,
cold wheels creaked on stone.
Longing for home,
I pulled my shawl close,
(though I had no shawl or house there),
and leaned into my husband's body,
my children's breath rising behind me,
radiant, white as bone.

— Cathy Lentes

The University of Virginia's College at Wise
Second Prize
Dory L. Hudspeth

Dory Hudspeth's prize-winning poem, while not exactly autobiographical, does come from personal experience. "Breast tumors were a problem for so many of my friends, and I had relatives who were suffering from catastrophic illnesses at the time," Hudspeth remembers. What came out of the period was "Pivot," a poem about the moment of diagnosis and all the uncertainty it generates, about the difference between the way professionals talk about that experience and the way it feels to the person facing the illness.

A native of Tennessee, Hudspeth has had what she terms "a very checkered history" of working for other people, including a stint at Barnes & Noble ("It was like being a kid in a candy store. The only problem was you didn't get to read all the books.") Right now, in addition to working as the volunteer herbalist for the Shaker Museum at South Union, Ky., she is an independent scholar living in Alvaton, near Bowling Green. The Shakers were a communal religious organization that flourished in America during the 19th century.

And what does an independent scholar do? Says Hudspeth with a laugh, "They just sit around and write or think about things." She produces work in a wide range of genres, including short stories; children's books, the latest being a book in search of a publisher about snapdragons; and of course poetry. "I'm primarily a poet," she asserts. In addition to *Now &*

Logan Hudspeth

Dory L. Hudspeth

Then, her poetry has been published in *Wind, Fresh Ground, Mobius,* and other journals. Hudspeth writes nonfiction magazine articles as well. These articles, many of which are based on her historical research about the Shakers, have appeared in *Back Home in Kentucky, Kentucky Living, American Weather Observer,* and *Kentucky Dental Journal,* the latter a piece about when the Shakers first permitted its members to wear false teeth.

It is her inquisitive nature, one which spurs her to read widely, that has shaped her use of language in general and her vocabulary in particular. "I read nonfiction, technical journals, and popular magazines that deal with science and archeology and weather and history and geology," reports Hudspeth. "I have a very eclectic vocabulary because of that. So far as a vocabulary or a language that is specifically regional, I can't come up with one."

Appalachia and its community of writers have, however, undeniably influenced her in another way. To date, she has attended the Appalachian Writers Workshop at the Hindman Settlement School in Hindman, Ky., twice. "It's writers' summer camp," she says. "It's not fancy, but it's very invigorating. If you're not writing something at the moment, you will be when you get done. And if you are writing something, it may change."

Like many of her poems, "Pivot" began with a fact. "In this case, it was the fact that the word for a group of hawks is a *kettle* because they resemble little air bubbles rising in a kettle of boiling water. I'm just fascinated by little facts," admits Hudspeth. "Hawks are not a herd or a flock or a gaggle. They're a kettle. And I find that's often the case with how I write. I start with some little piece of trivia and then try to apply it to other things.

"The things I observe outside the window here make their way into the poetry." She sums it all up by offering her view that "it's the job of the poet to take a specific, what you see when you're looking out the window, and make it feel universal."

—JHW

Pivot

Circling hawks boil the sky.
Fevers and transformational diagnosis
Are circles of influence or the swing of a door.
Doctors speak circumference, but
I live the radius, including the center.

A shadowy x-ray is a turning point,
A rusty barn hinge, a naming.
The green hinge of a moth kisses
The screen boundary between the dark
I know, and the dark I dream.

A rain crow calls the partings and returns.
The migration of big cats,
The sweep of a clock,
The band on a pickle jar,
The wind inside the wind.

—Dory L. Hudspeth

The East Tennessee State University Department of English

Third Prize

G.C. Waldrep

"I'm listening to my horse being annoyed down below me because I'm within his hearing, but I'm not feeding him," laughs G.C. Waldrep during a recent phone interview.

The reason that Waldrep customarily takes calls from his barn is that a little more than five years ago, he elected to join the Amish, the most conservative of all Mennonite groups. The Amish live in close-knit communities, still wear 18th and 19th century clothing, and travel by horse-and-buggy. While most Amish are not allowed to have phones in their houses, some are permitted to have them in their barns. Although the Amish and their conservative Mennonite cousins are quite diverse in many ways, what unites them, says Waldrep, is an insistence on evaluating and re-evaluating every aspect of daily life and culture in terms of their religious commitment.

The descendent of working class millworkers from the South Carolina hill country around Greenville, Waldrep grew up in South Boston, Va., not far from Danville. He attended Harvard University, majoring in history, then went on to do graduate work at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

In his early 20s, he left his academic career behind and joined the Mennonite community. He reports that, in fact, most Amish and Mennonite communities include people who didn't grow up in that particular tradition. "I guess you'd say it's a reaction to the rest of the world which is increasingly divorced from issues of the spirit," Waldrep explains. Currently, he's living in Yanceyville, N.C., where he is employed as a windowmaker in a small shop, supplying windows to building contractors.

After *Now & Then* was the first to publish his poetry in 1995, he has gone on to place his work in *South Carolina Review, Southern Poetry Review, Ascent,* and most recently in *Poetry.* His book, *Southern Workers and the Search for Community,* which he describes as both a history and a spiritual meditation on the meaning of the Southern textile experience, is due out from the University of Illinois Press later this summer.

The photographs set in Appalachia of

New York-native Winston Link inspired Waldrep's prize-winning poem "Steam." In particular, the catalyst was Link's 1956 "Hotshot Eastbound," taken as a train steamed past a drive-in movie in Iaeger, W.Va. "I quote Link for four lines in the middle of the poem. It was that quote from an article about him in *Preservation* magazine that sort of jumped out at me and made me think about how odd that kind of obsessive devotion was — which seemed to me a kind of misplaced spiritual devotion," recalls Waldrep. "It gets quite personal, of course. In the Amish-Mennonite tradition, we're devoted to working in close-knit communities, so the idea of lavishing that kind of attention on something that is basically, ultimately inhuman strikes me as somewhat skewed — beautiful, yes, but still somewhat odd and skewed. In the end, I guess, I find his attempt to portray technology and humanity together profoundly moving, but undeniably strange."

Growing up in southern Virginia in the 1970s and 1980s meant Waldrep grew up at a time when "there was the mainstreaming of the language, the loss of particular idioms." For instance, Waldrep remembers doing oral histories as a graduate student, interviewing elderly people who had made the farm-to-factory transition in upper South Carolina and East Tennessee. During one interview, a person used the phrase "of a night" as in "we used to do such-and-such of a night." Recalls Waldrep, "It struck me so forcefully that I had not heard that phrase since I was a child. I actually managed to miss the next 10 minutes of that interview."

Losing such idioms affects him profoundly as a poet. "It's like when you have a tooth out, your tongue goes repeatedly to the place where it was. And it's that way, I guess, with me and language when I sense there's been a loss. My poetic tongue keeps going back to that space."

Waldrep began writing poetry at about the same time he joined the Amish community, and he acknowledges that there might be a link between the two events. Would Waldrep have taken to writing poetry if he had not become a member of the Amish community? "I think I would, definitely. It would probably be different, though, simply because living the kind of life we try to live does give you the luxury of a certain amount of time to think through things. More than anything else, it places a premium on the quality and the extent of the attention that you pay the natural world and your neighbors. When you slow down this much, you can't help but pay attention, even to the uglier aspects." And, he concludes, "I think the quality of sustained attention is what sets poets apart from other writers, from the other arts."

— JHW

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"Knowledge"
Sally Buckner
Raleigh, N.C.

"Night Work"
Sandra Marshburn
Charleston, W.Va.

"The Apple Pickers"
Grace Cavalieri
Hedgesville, W.Va.

"Uncle Bill's Puzzles"
Jim Minick
Riner, Va.

"Mountain Distilled Scotch-Irish"
Rusty Freeman
Alexandria, Ohio

"Rhythms"
Patricia Shirley
Knoxville, Tenn.

"Raising the Nap"
A. Jane Hicks
Blountville, Tenn.

"The Impacted Center"
G.C. Waldrep
Yanceyville, N.C.

Steam

for Winston Link

He was, first and foremost, a lover
of trains: the length and depth of them,
the long homes the rails made
and their progeny, by which he meant
all of us. Standing on a hill
above Waynesboro he jettisoned
competing theories of aesthetics,
as if color were simply one more impediment
to the clarity he craved.
His intentions were immaculate
though he was paid well for his devotion,
though he was not above
mere tricks, the sleight of hand
by which love is maintained, made perfect
in the afterglow of our affections.
Asked why he shot his films
in black and white, he said
The train was black and white!
The engine was black, smoke is white,
steam is white, cars are black,
track is black, night is black.
Thus he bridged the gap between passion
and its consummation, a workman
in the employ of his own desire.
Backdrops all, the furniture
of this habitation — living rooms
lit at dusk, hardware stores,
children splashing in the trestle shadows
of his exquisite need;
in the coalfields of West Virginia
it was only the *image* of flight
that distracted him, once, on an earthbound
screen beside the smoke and thunder.

— G.C. Waldrep

MYTHS: How a Hunger for Roots Shapes Our Notions About Appalachian English

by Michael Montgomery

When I left my native East Tennessee in 1975 for graduate school in Florida — and then went on to teach at three schools outside the region — I found myself dissecting what I thought about Appalachia. I came to realize how strongly I subscribed to a number of "myths" about the region that sought to explain why the traditional culture and speech of the mountains are distinctive. Whether they are so is not the issue; people believe they are.

First of all, I realized that even people from the region believe that Appalachia is a foreign place, usually existing somewhere else — geographically, socially, and, most especially, culturally. Then there are other myths: Appalachia is timeless, Appalachia is Elizabethan, Appalachia is homogeneous, and Appalachia is isolated. These myths shape people's perceptions of the nature of language in the region.

The word *myth* can have many meanings. What I mean by the term here is an idea that continues to be meaningful to a culture, being shared widely and deeply by its members. It has value because it affirms some of a culture's deepest beliefs.

Think all those folks in Appalachia are speaking pure Elizabethan English? Think again.

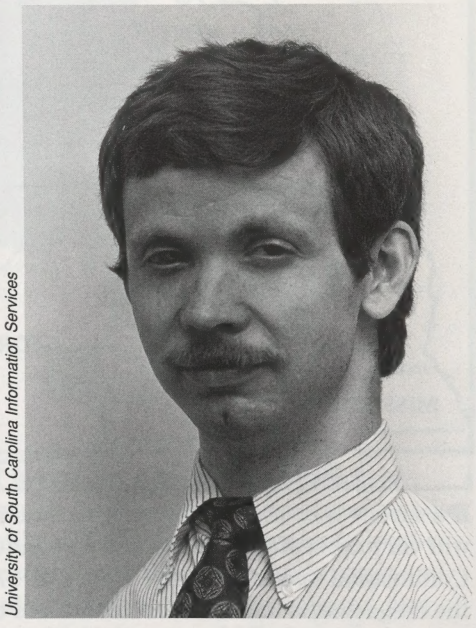
For all intents and purposes, a myth cannot be proven or disproven. While you can certainly cite evidence that runs counter to a myth, the fact that the myth persists only helps us understand its meaningfulness and staying power. All cultures, not just ancient and preliterate ones, have myths.

Three-quarters of a century ago, John C. Campbell, an educator and social worker who was as perceptive a commentator as the region has had, stated that Southern Appalachia was an area of the country "about which, perhaps, more things are known that are not true than any other part of the country." It'd be hard to argue that this observation doesn't have equal validity today.

Mental Maps

When I was growing up in East Knoxville, Tenn., in the 1950s and 1960s, we read the term *Appalachia* in geography textbooks or heard it as we studied current events, but we never used it ourselves. We had no need because as Knoxville suburbanites, we were *in* (as I was to realize later) but hardly *of* Appalachia.

Geographers studying the mental



University of South Carolina Information Services

Michael Montgomery

maps people have of the region have substantiated the fact that this notion is widespread. Many living in the region firmly believe that wherever "Appalachia" is, it's someplace other than where they reside. Researchers have found that when they ask people — from both inside and outside the region — to circle where they consider Appalachia to be on a map with only state lines drawn on them, responses vary — but in regular ways. Those living outside Central Appalachia say they live outside Appalachia altogether. Those who live in Central Appalachia consider the region's core to be elsewhere; for instance, Eastern Kentuckians see it as Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee. In particular, middle-class people in Central Appalachia often eschew the label for themselves but assign it to members of the working class living half a mile down the road, if that far.

I can see the causes of this curious phenomenon when I examine my own experience. For us, *Appalachia* called up two contrasting pictures: scenic mountains or economic distress, the latter linked with coal mining and "hillbillies." For the mountains, we already had perfectly suitable names: the Smokies to the east and the Cumberlands to the west. Since there was little poverty we could see and few real hillbillies, we had little use for the word *Appalachia.*

These images of the region were filtered through the media, both print and electronic. As historian Henry Shapiro first argued back in 1979 in his splendid book, *Appalachia on Our Mind,* this distorted concept of Appalachia began back in the late 19th century when commentators, fiction writers, and promoters not native to the region described a place filled with premodern people and lifestyles. If we doubt that stereotypes about mountain culture are still being perpetuated up to the present day, we need only peruse the titles in local bookshops that present Appalachia as a timeless region. Or we can consider the national news coverage about the search for Eric Rudolph, the fugitive believed to be holing up in what the media has portrayed as a "primitive" corner of North Carolina.

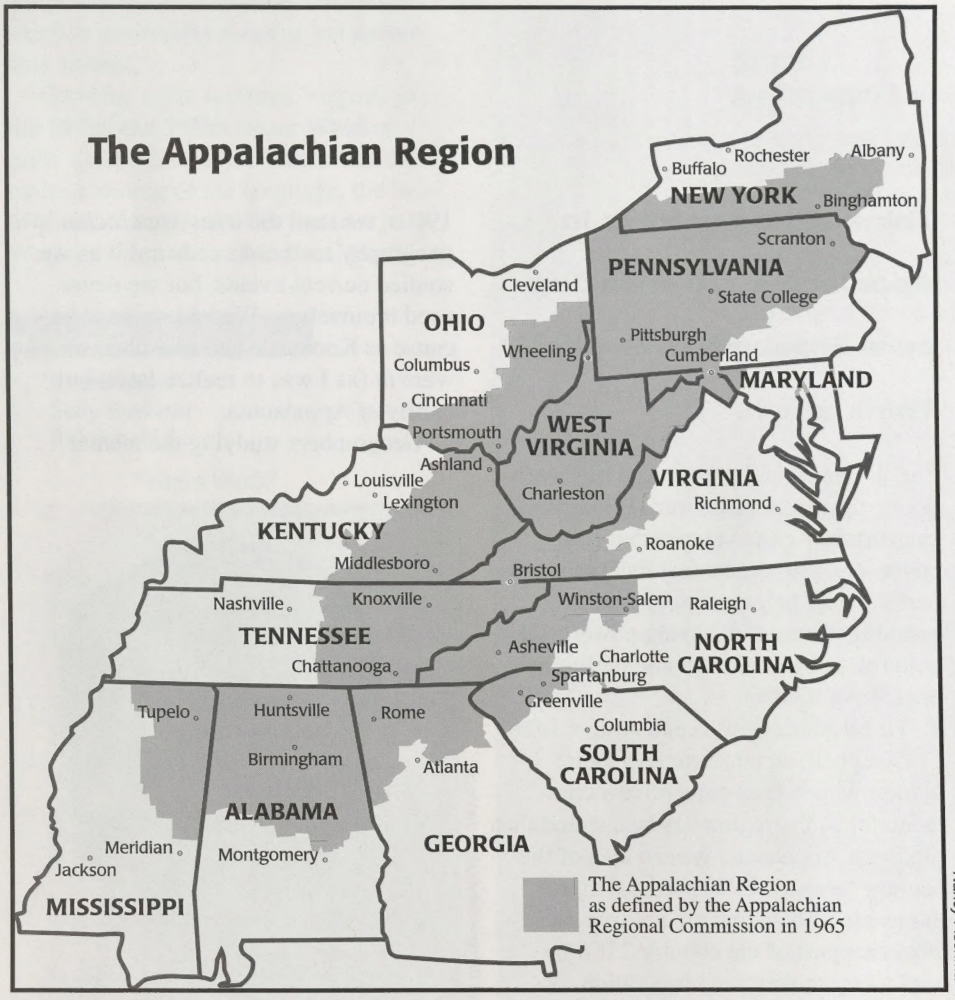
Many living in the region firmly believe that wherever "Appalachia" is, it's someplace other than where they reside.

In ways I could not then suspect, journalists conditioned my own experience of the mountains, its people, culture, and speech by presenting images: exotic, striking ones from those who were not natives, sympathetic ones from those who were. For a long time, I processed information about the region according to such stock images and stereotypes, those trusted categories we use for people other than ourselves.

Blind Spots

The second myth, one believed by millions of Americans, is that Appalachia is a region suspended in time: You pass through a time warp when you enter the mountains and, as a result, mountain people live in a different century. Which century is a matter of debate. Often, people pick the 16th or 17th, but others place Appalachia in the 14th century — Chaucer's time — or even earlier. The precise century is not relevant, the point being that mountain culture is considered to be old — at least three centuries old, a very long time by American standards. Not only is it old, but it is believed to have been static since the first English and Scotch-Irish immigrants landed in Atlantic ports in the 1700s and supposedly moved directly to the hills.

Naturalist, woodsman, and author



Nancy Fischman

If a survey is conducted with the question "Where is Appalachia?" the answer will vary according to where the respondent resides. The Appalachian Regional Commission boundary, used by *Now & Then* to determine acceptable content for the magazine, is based on a combination of socioeconomic and geographic similarities, mixed with a hefty dose of political considerations.

Horace Kephart did much to promulgate the view that time moves slowly, if at all, in the mountains in his 1913 account of Smoky Mountain life, *Our Southern Highlanders,* perhaps the most influential book on mountain people. His theme, and that of so many others since, was that mountain culture and language differ from the rest of the country since mountain people preserve forms that elsewhere have become archaic. The persistence of speechways down to the present — along with Child ballads (traditional British ballads collected and classified in the late 19th century by Harvard University's Francis James Child), of numerous tales about Jack (the best known of which had him climbing a very tall beanstalk), and other traditions — would seem to support this view. To the outsider, there must have been some extraordinary reason why these traditions have been preserved primarily in Appalachia, even though to insiders, the reason is perfectly natural and obvious: Ballads are fun to sing and Jack tales fun to hear.

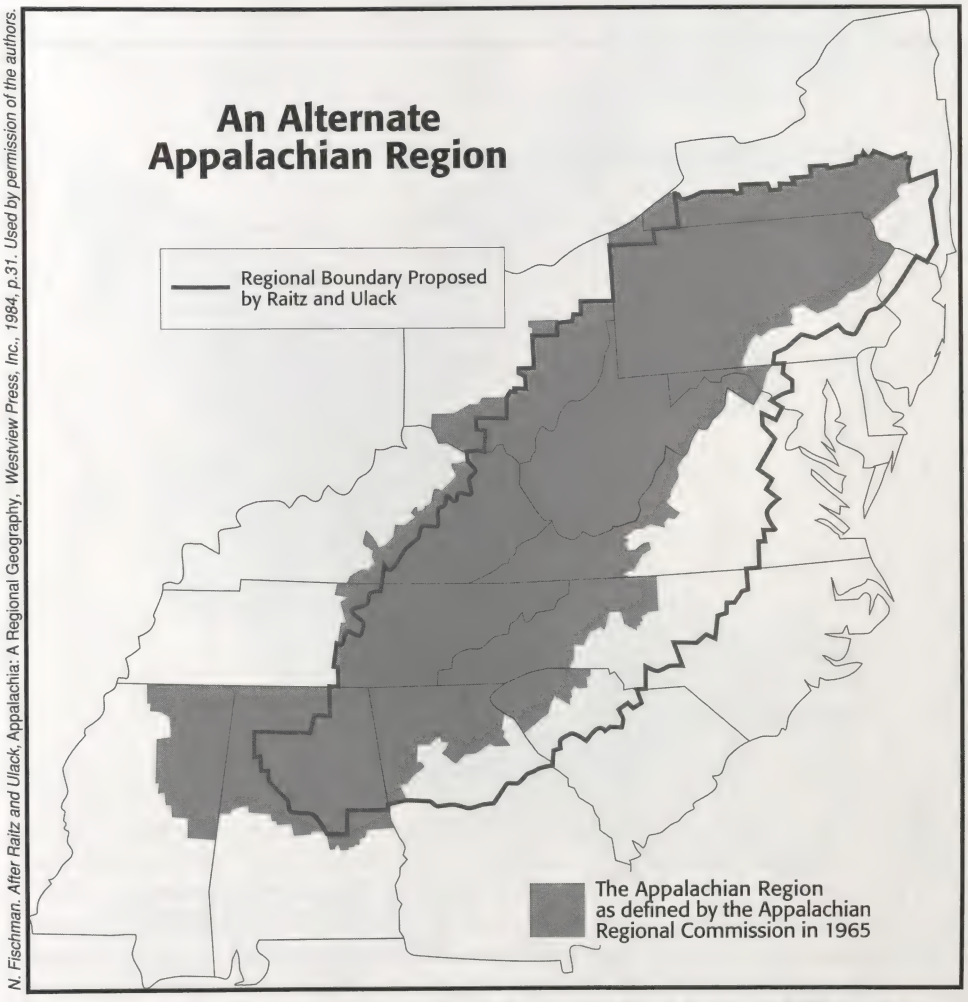
For a long time, I processed information about the region according to stock images and stereotypes, those trusted categories we use for people other than ourselves.

At the University of South Carolina, where I taught until last year and where poet and novelist James Dickey taught until his recent death, his book *Deliverance* had many admirers. When I once politely suggested to a colleague that Dickey's portrayal of mountain people might be slanted or anachronistic and that presentation of any other group of Americans in such a light in the 1970s would have sparked public objection, my suggestion was met with incomprehension. A colleague, a South Carolinian who is now a highly placed university administrator, responded to the same point with "I think the portrayal of those hillbillies was accurate. I've seen people like that myself."

My point is not that mountain people are considered fair targets for negative stereotyping when so many other groups no longer are. It is, rather, that many Americans have what may charitably be called a blind spot in their perceptions of Southern mountain people and culture. This blind spot also results in their having a deaf ear, hearing only archaisms when mountain speech is actually full of novelties — expressions that were apparently created in this country, perhaps even in the mountains, in the 19th century.

Despite the tendency to think everything distinctive about mountain speech is old, the fact is you can trace only about 20 percent of terms labeled "Appalachian" in the *Dictionary of American Regional English* to the British Isles. Most of the rest are innovations. Here I refer not only to names of plants or terms for moonshine, for which mountain speech is replete with innumerable, picturesque variations, but to expressions such as "hope how soon," as in "I hope how soon he gets here" which translates to "I hope he gets here soon" in standard American usage.

There are words such as *everwhich* and *everwho*, meaning whichever or whoever and appearing in sentences such as "Everwho was here left a terrible mess," as well as the words *knee deep* for bull frog and, inspired by the plague story in the Old Testament, *ferro* for locust. Then there is the charming sequence of terms for small children of different ages: *lap baby, knee baby*, and *setalong child,* to name a few. So one of the unrecognized stories about mountain language is,


An Alternate Appalachian Region
Regional Boundary Proposed by Raitz and Ulack
The Appalachian Region as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1965

N. Fischman. After Raitz and Ulack, Appalachia: A Regional Geography, Westview Press, Inc., 1984, p.31. Used by permission of the authors.

Two geographers from the University of Kentucky, Karl Raitz and Richard Ulack, proposed in 1982 that the boundary of Appalachia take into consideration topographic as well as socioeconomic similarities. Their boundary includes the upland Piedmont in Virginia and the Carolinas; the Blue Ridge in Virginia and Maryland; and other upland areas extending into New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. It excludes the lowland areas of Alabama and Mississippi.

in fact, its novelty and inventiveness, not its antiquity.

Shakespeare & Chaucer Don't Live Here Anymore

The third myth, probably the most familiar of all, follows from the second one: that Appalachian speech preserves a strong Elizabethan element. Although the period of literary English said to be closest to mountain speech is subject to different opinions, most commonly this myth likens mountain English to that of Shakespeare or to his Elizabethan contemporaries, poet Edmund Spenser and poet and dramatist Ben Jonson. Certainly over the years, as I have met and told people I am a linguist who grew up near the mountains, I have been frequently asked, often by highly educated people, "Isn't there supposed to be some place up there where they still speak Elizabethan English?"

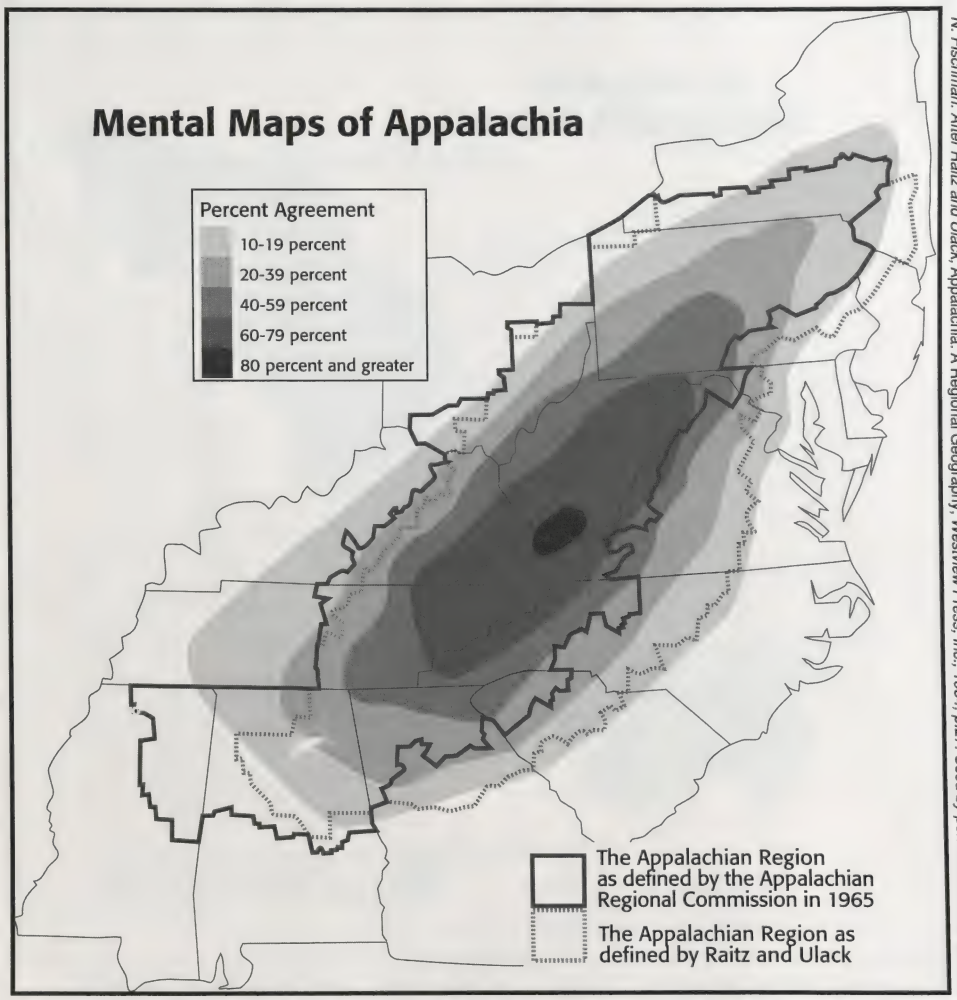
It was apparently William Goodell Frost, president of Berea College in Berea, Ky., from 1892 until 1920, who set the mold for this myth in his essay, "Our Contemporary Ancestors," published in 1899 in *Atlantic Monthly.* He wrote, "The rude language of the mountains is far less a degradation than a survival. The [Old English] pronoun 'hit' holds its place almost universally. Strong past tenses, 'holp' for helped, 'drug' for dragged, and the like, are heard constantly; and the syllabic plural is retained in words [ending] in -st and others. The greeting as we ride up to a cabin is 'Howdy, strangers. 'Light and hitch your beasties.' Quite a vocabulary of Chaucer's words which have been dropped by polite lips, but which linger in these solitudes, has been made out by some of our students," he observes, pushing the English spoken by Kentucky mountaineers back to some 200 years before the reign of Elizabeth I.

> Despite the countless complexities and inconsistencies of life confronting an objective observer, outsiders generalize freely about mountain people and view mountain culture as far more uniform, and mountain communities as far more homogeneous, than is true.

As with so much else about Appalachia, the list of forms cited by Frost, what he called elsewhere "a striking survival of Saxon speech," took on a life of its own and was recycled in the writings of many others. In 1915, writer William Aspenwall Bradley wrote in an essay entitled "In Shakespeare's America" that "it is said that when the mountaineer begins to read at all, he displays so marked a preference for Shakespeare that it is invariably the works of that poet that have most frequently to be rebound in any library to which he has access."

If we smile at Bradley's notion that Kentucky mountain children have a natural affinity for Shakespeare and dismiss it as dated, if not entirely fanciful, we might consider a relatively recent statement — more restrained but in the same vein — from Floyd Watkins, a recently retired professor of American literature at Emory University in Atlanta. In 1949, he wrote in "The Southern Mountaineers' Archaic English," published in *The Georgia Review*: "If a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer or William Shakespeare were suddenly to find himself in the twentieth-century American Appalachian Mountains, he would in many respects feel almost at home."

When people ask where mountaineers still speak Elizabethan English, I sometimes turn the question around and inquire exactly where this place is supposed


Mental Maps of Appalachia
Percent Agreement
10-19 percent
20-39 percent
40-59 percent
60-79 percent
80 percent and greater
The Appalachian Region as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1965
The Appalachian Region as defined by Raitz and Ulack

N. Fischman. After Raitz and Ulack, Appalachia: A Regional Geography, Westview Press, Inc., 1984, p.27. Used by permission of the authors.

A 1980 study conducted by Raitz and Ulack at the University of Kentucky queried 2,331 students from 63 institutions in and adjacent to the Appalachian region. The researchers asked the students where they lived and whether they considered themselves to be from Appalachia. They also instructed them to draw a line around Appalachia as they perceived it.

to be. To date, no one has been able to answer my query. That people somewhere in the mountains use Elizabethan speech is something "everybody just knows."

In fact, we can trace only a small portion of mountain speech to Shakespeare's time. A considerably larger element, especially when it comes to grammar, can be found in the language of Scotch-Irish immigrants rather than in the writings of the Stratford bard, but even this is fairly small.

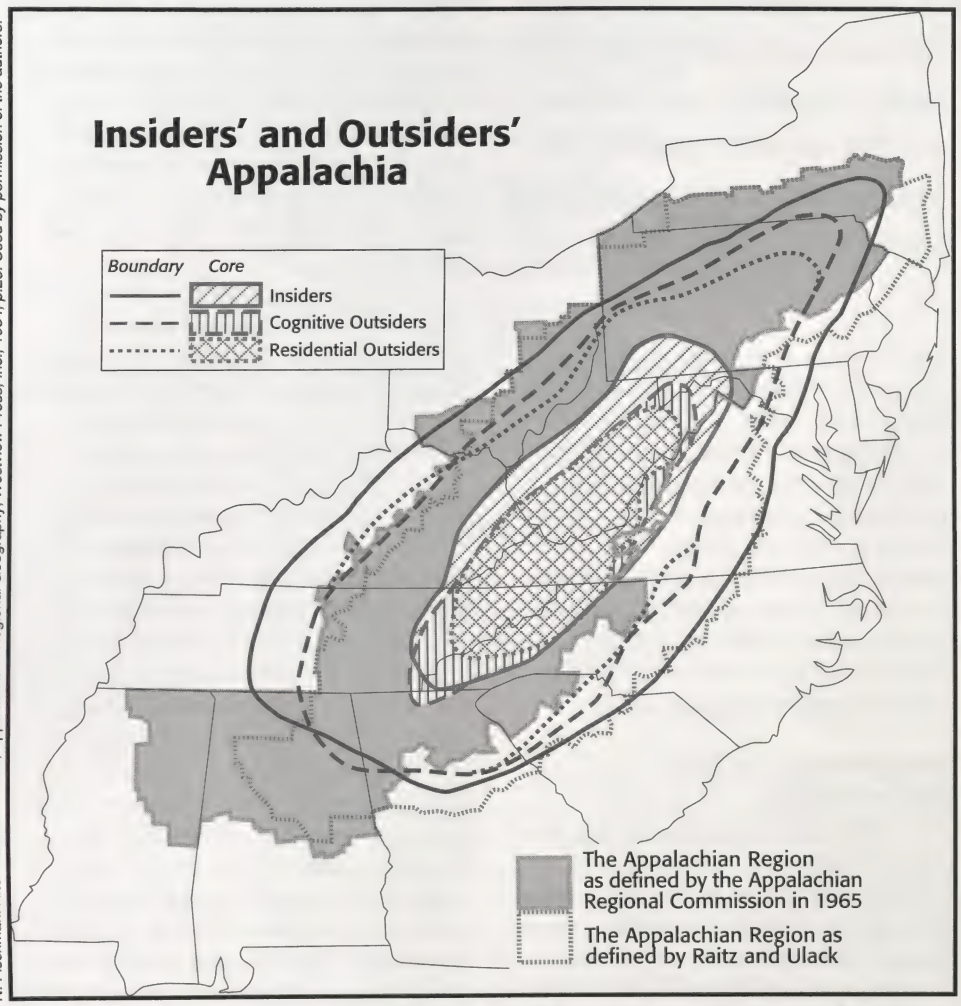
No Appalachian community, however small, is uniform.

Another Neglected Story

Complementing the idea that mountain people have been stalled in time for several centuries is the fourth myth: Everyone in Appalachia has the same culture and speech. Over the past century, there is a massive literature, both popular and scholarly, that uses *Appalachian* as a generic term. Despite the countless complexities and inconsistencies of life confronting an objective observer, outsiders generalize freely about mountain people and view mountain culture as far more uniform, and mountain communities as far more homogeneous, than is true. The result is false or misleading generalizations when people use labels like *Appalachia* or *Southern Highlands* to refer to mountain people or their speech en masse, even though they base those generalizations on individual communities or a handful of people.

Again, a classic instance is Kephart, whose *Our Southern Highlanders* derived from the former librarian's residence in a small remote area — an upper branch of Hazel Creek in Swain County, N.C., from 1904 to 1907. On the positive side, Kephart was a keen observer and far more sympathetic to mountain folk than many of his successors. We are much in his debt for the detailed record he left behind. In particular, his chapter, "Mountain Dialect," was the first thorough treatment of the subject and the only one for another two decades. Yet his presentation spoke of mountaineers and their speech generically. He almost never qualifies or localizes his description of mountain speech, even though some terms he cites can't be found in any other study or reference work on American or British English, no matter how comprehensive. There's no way to know, for instance, whether the verb *block* meaning "to blockade or make moonshine" was confined to a small area of North Carolina or was more widespread in the mountains and merely missed by others.

In few other parts of this country are general labels so routinely applied as in Appalachia. If, for example, linguists study the speech of two communities in California or New Hampshire, we don't expect their books to be called "Western English" or "New England English." Yet we're hardly surprised when a book based on two communities in West Virginia is called *Appalachian English,* a 1976 book written by linguists Walt Wolfram and Donna Christian. How can such an enormous region, which takes in parts of eight, 10 or 13 states, depending on the definition, be viewed as uniform? Only, I


Insiders' and Outsiders' Appalachia
Boundary
Core
Insiders
Cognitive Outsiders
Residential Outsiders
The Appalachian Region as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1965
The Appalachian Region as defined by Raitz and Ulack

N. Fischman. After Raitz and Ulack, Appalachia: A Regional Geography, Westview Press, Inc., 1984, p.28. Used by permission of the authors.

The perceived boundary for Appalachia varied according to whether students lived in Appalachia and considered themselves Appalachian (insider); lived in Appalachia and didn't consider themselves Appalachian (cognitive outsider); or lived outside Appalachia (residential outsider). Raitz and Ulack found that cognitive outsiders included a majority of those who resided within the Appalachian portions of Alabama, Georgia, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Tennessee. A majority of the students from the Appalachian portions of Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, and West Virginia, however, considered themselves Appalachians (insiders). The core area, as defined by 60 percent or more of the respondents in each group, also varied with how respondents perceived themselves. (For more information about this study, see Karl B. Raitz and Richard Ulack, *Appalachia: A Regional Geography,* Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1984, and Ulack and Raitz, "Perceptions of Appalachia," *Environment and Behavior,* Vol. 14, No. 6.)

think, if it exists in the mind as a timeless region inhabited by a single ethnic group, a merger of the English and Scotch-Irish.

Anyone who scrutinizes the history of Appalachia finds that it has been ethnically diverse since early days, when English, Scotch-Irish, German, and other European groups settled in mixed communities, soon establishing contact with people of African and Native American descent. Logging, mining, and other industries came to many parts of the mountains in the 19th century. These brought thousands of Italian, African, Irish, Polish, and people of other ancestries to Appalachia to work and then to stay with their families, which presumably diversified the speech and culture from area to area. No Appalachian community, however small, is uniform. At a minimum, there are always differences between generations. The cultural diversity of Appalachia is another neglected story.

When people ask me where mountaineers still speak Elizabethan English, I sometimes turn the question around and inquire exactly where this place is supposed to be.

Stagnation in the Mountains?

The fifth myth underlies the first four: Long-term physical isolation caused mountain speech and culture to become static and lag behind other parts of the country. This seemingly self-evident notion has been so routinely invoked to explain the character of mountain culture and speech, that it might seem unquestionable. Statements about mountain isolation are numerous and well-known. For example in his 1901 essay, "The Southern Mountaineer," novelist John Fox Jr. provided a classic example. "In the march of civilization westward, the Southern mountaineer has been left in an isolation almost beyond belief," Fox averred. "He was shut off by mountains that blocked and still block the commerce of a century, and there for a century he has stayed. He has had no navigable rivers, no lakes, no coasts, few wagon roads, and often no roads at all except the beds of streams. He has lived in the cabin in which his grandfather was born, and in life, habit and thought he has been merely his grandfather born over again."

But a closer look at this concept calls it into question. There are many different ways to be isolated. Certainly people and communities can be physically isolated from other communities, especially from cities. But a community need not be remote to be isolated from its surroundings, as shown by the isolation of inner-city neighborhoods in major metropolitan areas. Nor is a remote community really isolated if it has frequent contact with outsiders, often by means of access to media (not a new factor by any means; before television, there were radio and newspapers).

The work of Appalachian historians has seriously questioned how much validity the idea of "isolation" has in relation to the region. For instance, visitors to Cades Cove, the preserved mountain community that is part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, today find an enclosed environment with log structures preserved by the National Park Service. They think they are seeing the remnant of an isolated, self-sufficient community that had a pioneer lifestyle until the 1930s, a view long promoted by the park. However, historian Durwood Dunn, a descendent of cove residents, has shown in his 1988 book, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937,* that its several hundred inhabitants had much commercial interaction with Maryville and the rest of Blount County throughout its century-long existence and that there was constant movement in and out of the community.

The myth of Appalachian isolation shows how little is understood about mountain life — or at least about how mountain people and outsiders interpret the physical remoteness from cities in very different ways. No doubt life in the mountains is often harsh and demanding, and in wintertime, transportation is often difficult. To most mountain folk, however, this is hardly too high a price to pay for living there year-round. While they have differed from place to place, many if not most mountain communities have not been isolated so much as detached and independent. What outsiders view as "isolation," local people often see as "independence," a desirable condition that grants them freedom. Traditional mountain society has always been aware of the larger society. Far from being passive recipients of outside language and culture, mountain people have actively chosen and negotiated how much and what kind of interaction they want to have with the society at large.

This is true today, and it must have been true over the past two centuries. In short, the strong attachments that mountain people have to a traditional way of life makes them less open to change, more resistant to accommodate to the mainstream culture. This explains the conservativeness of mountain culture — and why mountain people hold on to older expressions — much better than the existence of physical isolation.

A Quintessential Cultural Repository

Cumulatively, these five myths imply that Appalachia, wherever it is, is a region whose landscape, senses of time and place, lifestyle, and language differ from the modern world we know. These myths are very much a part of how we view Southern mountain culture, and we probably rely on them more than we realize. I have sometimes cited evidence against them or questioned their validity, but I've done this not to dispute the fact that they are based on a kernel of truth so much as to demonstrate their power.

What outsiders view as "isolation," local people often see as "independence," a desirable condition that grants them freedom.

To many, mountain culture preserves what the rest of the country has lost. In our country today, people view Appalachia as a quintessential cultural repository, and traditional mountain culture commands immense respect. While it is true that Appalachia has been neglected,

marginalized, and exploited, it retains extraordinary significance for countless Americans because of their own lack of cultural bearings and lack of cultural memory. These myths provide roots and a sense of history you can claim whenever you wish.

Thus, modern myths about Appalachia, especially in regard to its speech, reveal more about mainstream society — its insecurities, its nostalgia, and its curiosity — than about mountain speech and culture. But these myths — especially the belief that mountain speech is Elizabethan — give roots to mountain people as well, roots that can be used to claim prestige and a heritage. Since Shakespearean English represents what most consider the pinnacle of literary expression in the English language, to be one of the people allegedly still using it gives us status.

Modern myths about Appalachia, especially in regard to its speech, reveal more about mainstream society — its insecurities, its nostalgia, and its curiosity — than about mountain speech and culture.

When people ask me whether there isn't some place in the mountains where Elizabethan English is still spoken, the question is not just a matter of polite curiosity. After they fail to name where this place is supposed to be, I have sometimes answered their query by admitting, "Well, no, that's really only a romantic notion. It's not really true." Their response is one of sincere, visible dismay. It's something people want to believe. All things considered, if Appalachia didn't exist, we might have to invent it. N&T

Michael Montgomery, who grew up in Knoxville, Tenn., taught English and linguistics at the University of South Carolina from 1981 to 1999. He has written extensively about Southern American English, especially that of Southern Appalachia, and its history. He is finishing a comprehensive dictionary of the traditional language of the Smoky Mountain region of Tennessee and North Carolina.

Songcatcher

Cecil J. Sharp (1859-1924)

Sheriff Dugger fetched the songcatcher
just after supper. The last long, gold
light of Midsummer's Eve lit
the path along the well-worn trace.

In the pretty talk of those old
"love songs," the Englishman asked Daddy
to sing; the root seeking the branch, song
of heath and highland, ballad of hill and hollow.

Daddy took down his bow and spun
a night-web. Songcatcher penned
the song to the page, a soot-speckled
snowfield, butterflies pinned in a case.

The songcatcher's lady caught
swift words, a swallow in flight,
snatched the sweet old words
from the honeysuckle moonlight.

Sun rose on Gypsen Davey riding away
with the lady, Daddy sung dry, strong
coffee, sweet milk, sorghum and biscuit,
manna on the dew-sparkled morn.

— A. Jane Hicks

Between 1916 and 1918, Englishman Cecil Sharp spent 46 weeks visiting remote communities in the southern Appalachian Mountains. Assisted by Maude Karpeles (who took down words as he noted music), Sharp collected 1,682 tunes of Anglo origin from 218 singers. Jane Hicks imagines her Dugger ancestors' response to the Englishman's overtures while she teaches in the Sullivan County, Tenn., school system. Now & Then *has published many of Hicks' poems, along with* Iron Mountain Review, Sow's Ear, Wind, *and* Potato Eyes.

Speaking the 'Speak

by Christine M. Goldbeck

In the Pennsylvania coalfields, CoalSpeak has been transformed from a badge of shame to a badge of honor, thanks in part to the Internet.

Not long ago, it was shameful to talk as if you were from the Appalachian Pennsylvania coal region. In fact, many natives who migrated from the anthracite fields in the northeastern part of the state confide that they enrolled in speech lessons to disengage their coalcracker accent.

Not so today. The patois once seen as uncultured is now viewed as an important cultural asset that deserves to be remembered and — in certain environments — used. How times change.

"I played in the Shamokin High School Band and therefore attended all football games," recalls Eric McKeever, author of *Tales of the Mine Country,* a collection of memories from his childhood in the Pennsylvania coal region of Shamokin during the 1930s. McKeever is a native of Shamokin, located in the Appalachian county of Northumberland. Now 70, he lives in the Baltimore suburb of Lutherville, Md., but devotes many hours to coal region studies and historical preservation. The owner and operator of minecountry.com and the publisher of *Anthracite History Journal*, an online magazine about the coal region, McKeever is the descendent of several generations of anthracite miners. "Most of the schedule was with other coal towns: Mount Carmel, Pottsville, Tamaqua, Shenandoah. Sunbury was the only place outside the coal region, though once in a while, we played some other town as well. Whenever we would arrive in Sunbury, the bus was greeted with raucous cries of 'coalcrackers!'

"I think this contributed to a sense of inferiority when I left the coal regions and started to struggle so hard to change my accent." McKeever says that in 1948, when he attended what was then called Mansfield State Teachers College in Tioga County, not far from the Pennsylvania/New York border, coal region students were advised to take a particular speech course. It was designed to help them overcome the usage and pronunciation characteristic to the coal region. To speak like a coalcracker, the term used to describe people from the anthracite region, was considered degrading.

CoalSpeak

The late John Henry O'Hara novelized CoalSpeak, the unofficial term for this dialect, in the "Gibbsville Cycle" of his writings. Gibbsville, the fictionalized version of O'Hara's hometown of Pottsville, Pa., was the setting for his novels *Appointment in Samarra, Ten North Frederick,* and other titles as well as for collections such as *Sermons and Soda Water.* When O'Hara was writing about the region, many natives took offense because his dialogue was so true to the locale. These days, as a measure of how far things have come, there is a move to have O'Hara's work taught in schools because of its historical accuracy, and first edition prints of his books are selling for $1,000 and more.

Coal region students were advised to take a particular speech course designed to help them overcome the usage and pronunciation characteristic to the coal region.

More than a century after their ancestors toiled, and sometimes died, in the hard coal mines, which cover some 500 square miles in Northeastern Pennsylvania, some coalcrackers use the lingo with

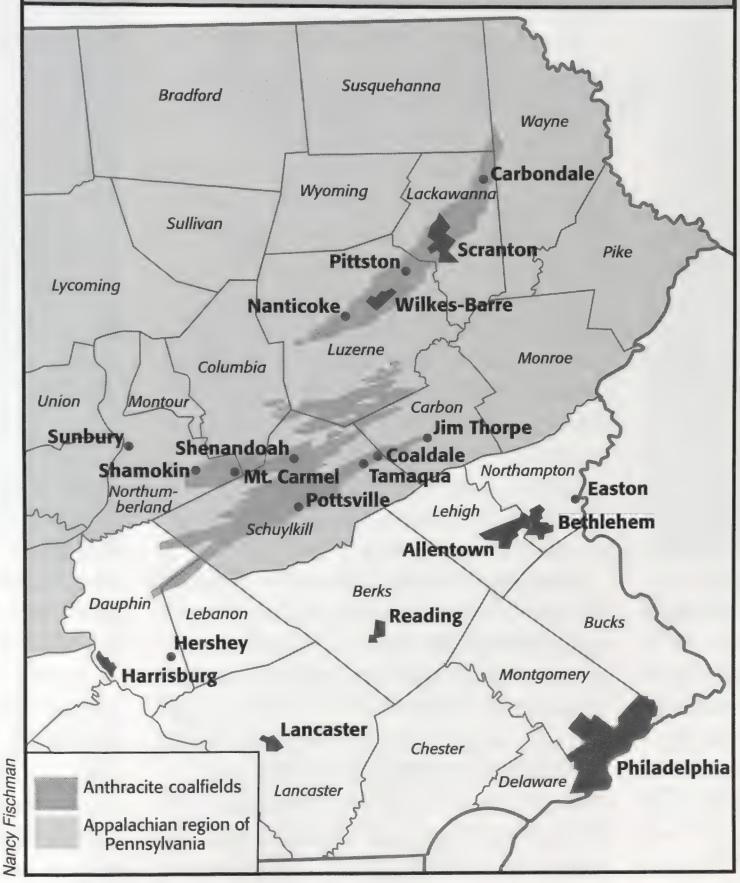
a degree of pride. This resurgence of pride in what was once a source of embarrassment appears to have started in part as a result of the web site coalregion.com, which features an evolving dictionary titled "CoalSpeak: The original, uncensored CoalSpeak dictionary!" The site was launched in the mid-1990s after its creators, Jay Schutawie, brother Jim Schutawie, Amy and Denise McFadden, and Jamie Kornak, all born and raised in the anthracite fields and now living outside the area, started using CoalSpeak in their e-mail correspondence.

"In doing that, we began a list and kept adding to it. Then we decided, 'Let's put it on the Web.' So, in November of 1997, we went to coalregion.com," says webmaster Jay Schutawie, who now lives in Austin, Tex., and works as a software program manager. Schutawie says visitors to the site and its message board are a mixture of natives who have established themselves in locations throughout the world and those who still live in the coal region. Coalregion.com receives about 10,000 hits a month, 7,000 of which are new hits.

Various publications have preserved the dialect: for example, Tom Klopfer's book featuring coal region terms and sayings and titled *The Anthracite Idiom, or Sundays We Are Closed Go Around the Back* and the work of regional historians, such as Stu Richards, Tommy Symons, and Bill O'Brien, each of whom has defined interests in one or many aspects of coal region history. Still, it seems no formal study on coal region linguistics has been done. Yet historians and citizens agree that CoalSpeak is based in ethnicity and industry. This region was once the industrial hub of the nation, and immigrant miners and their families who came to work in the mines and on the rails built to transport coal to major markets made the place a cultural stew.

To understand why the dialect was, and in some places still is, considered embarrassing, you first have to consider the history of this place. The hard coal region of Appalachian Pennsylvania was built on the industrial acuity of entrepreneurs and the men and boys they employed to mine anthracite. Regardless of their country of origin, these hardworking laborers and their families were peasants. In the 1840s, the Irish came to escape the disasters of their homeland. Immigration continued through the 1880s, when the Slavs came en masse from Eastern and Northern Europe. Among these were Poles and Czechs.

Eastern Pennsylvania and the Anthracite Coalfields



Nancy Fischman

These and other groups came to America with little else but their dreams and the dialect of their homeland. The Irish, for example, are credited with bringing *youze* and *yiz,* the local idiom for *you* to the area. These terms are to the coal region what *y'all* is to the South, a way of signaling the second person plural, or — in other words — of indicating that you're speaking to more than one person, a distinction that standard English isn't equipped to make. Some elderly Irish still use *me* for *my,* as in "I can't find me hammer." Eastern Europeans made their own contribution to CoalSpeak. Because many Eastern European groups do not have the "th" sound in their mother tongue, many older people in "da coal region," one and two generations removed from the mines, count "one, two, tree."

Ho, Butt

Some of the terms the immigrant workers brought are no longer in use. One example is the word *laggin,* which was lumber used for support in coal holes. Its usage carried over to mean any type of board used as a support or prop; however, it is not readily used today.

The dialect of ethnic foods, however, remains very much part of coalcracker culture. Local people still eat *pierogies* (potato-filled dough pockets), *kielbossi* (Polish sausage), *haluskie* (a noodle and cabbage dish), *halupkie* (cabbage rolls), *bleenie* (potato pancakes), and other ethnic favorites that many non-natives have never pronounced, much less tasted. In fact, some of these groups hold annual ethnic festivals, of which the foods are *the* feature. Churches, founded by members of the various groups, often hold dinners and feasts featuring these old ethnic favorites.

In addition to appropriating words immigrants brought to the new country, mining gave rise to a new lingo that miners, their laborers, and other mine employees used to communicate during their long,

This resurgence of pride in what was once a source of embarrassment appears to have started in part as a result of the web site coalregion.com. Coalregion.com receives about 10,000 hits a month.

Christine Goldbeck

John "Stu" Richards (l) and Cliff Hutton (r) re-enact a historic scene involving an Irish/Welsh dispute in Mahanoy City, Pa. Richards is playing "Bully Bill" Thomas, a Welsh thug and agitator. He is sporting a coalminer's lantern and jelly bucket (lunch pail). Many words brought to this region by immigrants remain in use today.

dark days underground. "Mining certainly created our dialect," says Schutawie. "Look at the word *sprag*. It's a coal-mining term used every day." A sprag was a block of wood carried by brakemen to stop small mine cars. Outside the mines, it means to drag one's feet. "*Jelly bucket* is another one," Schutawie says. "A jelly bucket was a miner's lunch pail." Both *sprag* and *jelly bucket* are terms widely in use in the area today.

Using the dialect in texts, both physical and virtual, seems to be not only preserving words but also teaching them to generations far removed from the mines. For example, in Shenandoah, Pa., a northern Schuykill County municipality in the southern anthracite field, the term *Ho, Butt* remains in use among many elderly males; it's also gaining popularity among youth. *Ho, Butt* translates to "come here, I need you" or "Hey? You!" It is the way the miner used to summon his assistant, who in mining parlance was his *butty*. The fact that it is becoming more popular seems to be attributable to the popularity of coalregion.com and to other Internet online groups, such as McKeever's Yahoo groups: Anthracite History Club, Molly Maguire Club, and the Coal Region Book Nook.

Interestingly, while most CoalSpeak is essentially the same throughout the various locales in the coal region, including the counties of Schuykill, Carbon, Northumberland, Luzerne, and Lackawanna, there are interesting variations in the dialect as you move from place to place. An example is the way people born in the Wilkes-Barre area in Luzerne County pronounce *Scranton,* a city roughly 20 miles up the road in Lackawanna County. People in Wilkes-Barre say ScranTON, while most folks in northern Schuykill County, just to the south of Luzerne, call this place SCRANten. Scrantonians themselves prefer the Luzerne County inflection.

Native coalcracker Robert P. Wolensky, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, observes that these regional dialectical differences are likely the result of natural barriers, namely "the mountains between the northern, middle, and southern anthracite fields." Dialectal differences from town to town can be attributed to the political barriers in the many towns in the anthracite region. "A cultural ecology has led to subpatois," Wolensky says.

Odd as it may seem, while there are manmade mountains of culm, a byproduct of coal mining that today is combusted to produce energy in facilities called cogeneration plants, the anthracite region is also known for its beautiful mountains, valleys, forests, and waterways. However, due to the mountainous terrain, in the days when the mines operated, before automobile travel, a trip to the neighboring town was a day-long adventure. Each town was an entity unto its own. So, local dialects inside regional dialects developed.

Dumb Speech Patterns

"To me," says McKeever, "our dialect is another example of ways in which the anthracite coal regions are unique. They are unique in history, culture, landscape, and speech patterns. When I first read "CoalSpeak" (coalregion.com) several years ago, it was with much amusement at the familiarity of so many of the words and phrases," McKeever says. "As I continued to read, my amusement changed to a sober realization that I could use 80 percent of those words and phrases without feeling the slightest bit self-conscious if I were talking to another coalcracker who was also using them."

Coalcrackers realize their dialect did not originate in educated, elite circles. They also know that some people, even natives, will continue to view the local language as uncultured. These facts do not remove the significance of the dialect where the industrial history of the region is concerned, notes McKeever. "The fact is they *are* dumb speech patterns, but that part is important. They are the speech patterns of breaker boys — uneducated, grown to manhood without ever having been children. In a sense, these men never were boys. They were full-time workers at seven or eight years old and so remained throughout their lives. A good part of the coal region dialect is traceable to child labor."

Schutawie, aware that some people still consider CoalSpeak the backwoods talk of uneducated people, provides a disclaimer at coalregion.com. "We hope you enjoy this list of words, phrases, locations, and colloquialisms commonly used in the Coal Region of Eastern Pennsylvania. And we sincerely hope no one is offended by anything written here." Included in its ordering information is an example of coal country lingo: "Remember to include the address of where youz would like da booklet(s) sent. Tanks!!" Out of the 2,600 individuals who have signed the site's guest book, only three people note that they found the dialect dictionary offensive or inappropriate.

> "The fact is they *are* dumb speech patterns, but that part is important."
>
> — Eric McKeever

Before It's Gone

Coal region historians attribute the increase in appreciation for and use of CoalSpeak to the popularity of regional cultural studies, the same nationwide phenomenon that has given rise to a growth in local historical groups. In recent years, Shenandoah organized its own historical society, and there has been a resurgence in interest in other local historical clubs,

Christine Goldbeck

Musician/songwriter Chuck Barr leads Tommy Symons, dressed as a breaker boy, in reciting lyrics Barr wrote in tribute to Irish mine workers. Barr and young Symons are part of a team of re-enactors who bring coal region history to life.

both physical groups and computer clubs, throughout the coal region.

"It seems we're trying to capture this thing before it disappears," says Schutawie. "That's a big reason for our site: just to record it before it is gone."

Indeed, it is not out of the ordinary these days to speak the lingo in public places. You might even see several area politicos and local citizens using CoalSpeak on a Friday or Saturday evening in Shenandoah's Coal Street Café or over at the Lyric, also in Shenandoah, and known for ethnic specialties and traditional coal region atmosphere, and even in RJ's, a nightclub/restaurant for young coalcrackers, far removed from the mines but still close enough to their hardworking immigrant roots. N&T

"Mining certainly created our dialect."

—Jay Schutawie

Christine M. Goldbeck is a former photojournalist, columnist, and newspaper editor who has won numerous state awards and one national award for her writing. She lives and writes in Shenandoah, Pa.

Proud to be American

by Christine M. Goldbeck

All is quiet in here now. Bill, the proud owner of Blind Bill's Beef-N-Brew, is reading the obituaries in *The Fairlane County Journal.* I nod to him and saunter to my customary place at the far end of the bar.

"Doctor Sam," he says, throwing aside the newspaper and rising to pour me a cold frothy mug of Yuengling, the local beer. "Didn't expect ta see youze back so soon after the long night we had in here. Da wife is madder than all hell wit me. Says I gotta give up drinkin' and socializin' with the likes of you guys."

"Thanks, Bill. Get back to your paper and I'll sit here with my beer and my thoughts." Blind Bill is not sightless, and he does not serve beef. He sells beer and Kessler's whiskey. Only! Except, that is, for Fridays when Bill's wife cooks up bleenies and haluskie from noon until six. That's it! When it's gone, it's gone.

God help those poor souls who drop by looking for a sandwich.

"Don't serve nawthin else 'cause nawthin else matters here, youze know. Youze want that fancy stuff, youze can hitch a ride to The Penn Club out there on Snob Hill" is the explanation Bill recites when out-of-towners drop by for a drink and want something as exotic as a Beefeater Martini.

Blind Bill's has been here, and under the same name, for more than a hundred years. It was the miners' tavern

For more information, the following reference volumes and novels contain information about the anthracite region and the culture that gave rise to CoalSpeak.

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell, *Growing Up in Coal Country.*

Campbell, Patrick, *A Molly Maguire Story.*

Devers, John, *The Coal Cracker.*

Dublin, Thomas, *When the Mines Closed.*

Glodek, Geraldine, *Nine Bells at the Breaker ... An Immigrant's Story.*

Haldeman, James, *Panther Valley Tales.*

Kuchta, David, *Once a Man Twice a Boy* and *No. 9 Mine: Driving, Closing, and its Rebirth as a Tourist Mine.*

Major, Mark and H.T. Crown, *A Guide to the Molly Maguires*

Martin, Leo G., *Irish Day* and *Coal and Iron.*

McKeever, Eric, *Tales of the Mine Country.*

Miller, Donald E. and Richard E. Sharpless, *The Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields.*

Niehoff, Walter H. II, *The Valley Gazette* (a monthly newspaper strong on coal region history), Gazette Publications, 102 W. Water St., Lansford PA 18232.

Poliniak, Louis, *When Coal Was King.*

when Langon Anthracite operated its mine and colliery on the western end of town. Call me sentimental or spooky, if you will, but I swear that sometimes I can hear the coughs of the men who spent their days in the belly of the earth and their nights in here, washing the coal dust from their throats and the fear from their hearts.

Bill says the bar has always been in the family. In fact, he refuses to die until his son, William Paul IV, "wises up and comes home from California to be proprietor of this fine establishment." Like young Billy, I am from here. I came back after my wife, a native of Boston, died. I shut down my thriving practice and came "home" to take care of coalcrackers and to take care of me. I've not regretted the decision, even though sometimes my friends in Boston accuse me of being crazy for wanting to live here. "These are my people," I tell them. "These are my roots. If people like me do not care, the place will continue to go downhill. The rebirth has to start somewhere, and it might as well start with me."

Call me sentimental or spooky, if you will, but I swear that sometimes I can hear the coughs of the men who spent their days in the belly of the earth and their nights in here, washing the coal dust from their throats and the fear from their hearts.

A draft beer costs 30 cents here in Blind Bill's. There's just no place like it left in Sylvantia—or even over in Miner's City or Ashville or up in Hilltown. The least expensive, next to Bill's, is 35 cents in Coalton, where the Irish drink in homage to Black Jack Kehoe.

Today, our townsfolk say, this community, Sylvantia, a town once alive with more than 29,000 residents, is going to pot. What they mean is that the place is going downhill. I am not certain they are right about this. I understand that they are worried about underage drinking, drugs, unruly youngsters, and the lack of respect for the town's ordinance on doggie business. I am concerned about their lack of understanding for our newest residents. Tiny was the one who brought the issue to the forefront in here early this morning. The story is worth repeating because these fellas seem to forget that their antecedents were foreigners.

"Que pasa me ass!" Tiny stormed in shortly after 1 a.m. "Dis is unbelievable, don't youze think? For Chrissakes, I can't sleep for thinkin' about it."

Tiny stands taller than six feet and weighs nearly 300 pounds. He carelessly hung his flannel shirt over the back of his barstool and looked to see who was here to commiserate with him. It was a little hard to see through the smoky haze that had been building up for hours.

Bill's place is always open, although you will not find a soul in here between 4 and 6 a.m. This is because Bill's wife, Freda, cleans the bar during these hours, and nobody wants to be near her. She "has a mouth," they say. Even Bill runs from his bride rather than listen to her complain about "men and their drinkin'."

"I couldn't sleep for trying, fellas," says Tiny. "I tossed, and I turned until I decided that a beer and a walk might make me tired enough to try the bed again. Yo, Bill, how about a cold one? Hey, that you, Stanley? For crying out loud, Bill, can't you buy a fan—or at least open a window?"

"Quit yer bellyachin', Tiny," Stanley hollers, his voice raspy from too many Camel cigarettes. "Vat's vorse dan the cigar smoke is da coal dust that ud be comin' in da vindow if it was open."

Stanley is a retired miner. People in these parts say he is as old as anthracite. Bill always serves his first several drinks in a soup bowl so Stanley won't spill whiskey all over himself. The old chap has the shakes until the first few drinks are in him. After that, Stanley is as steady as a soldier at attention. Visitors think it is difficult to decide whether Stanley is drunk or sober because he talks with the old country accent. He does not read or write English well. His immigrant parents, who came to Sylvantia to make a better life for themselves, raised him to speak his native tongue, Polish, first. English was a second language in the Towislawski household. It was used to communicate with others outside of the home, and only then.

Also here this morning were Clancy, who is out to prove the Irish can outdrink any other culture, and Smooth, the forty-something union pipefitter who is out of work and out to get those nonunion rebels from "way down in Dixie" who are building the coal waste cogeneration plant on the hill.

"If we'd a had nuclear power in the Civil War, none of dis would be happenin' now" is a statement Smooth often makes. In fact, like always, the subject was on his mind this morning. "Ah, Bill. Take my mind off my troubles with those doozies from the land of Dixie, will ya? Tell the story about the time we had visitors from 'the city' in here."

"Ya know, Smooth, I like the way Tiny tells that one. Let him whet his whistle, buy him a shot of Kessler's, and I bet he'll tell it again. He's gotta know it by heart now."

Tiny snorted beer out his nostrils, which sent the bar crew into an uproarious fit of gut-busting laughter.

Tiny downed his pint and slid his glass down the bar to Bill. "Yeah, all right. Might as well. Cause pretty soon, I'll have to tell this yarn in that foreign tongue we gotta learn to speak in order to live around here these days."

"Vat's he talkink about, Bill?" Stanley looked confused.

"I'm not sure, old boy. But at least if he's telling a story, he won't be griping about whatever it is. Here, have another whiskey, Stan."

"OK, boys," Tiny calls the bar to attention. "Hey, Clancy, wake up, will ya? Here we go. We all know how much Bill hates it when those rich ones come in looking for a menu. Well, one night, this couple finds their way to town after missing the Route 61 turn up in Mountain

Edward E. Shank

Vista. What a pretty pair they were. 'May we see a menu, sir?' the gentleman asked. 'Menu?' said Bill, his eyes as wide as Kennedy half-dollars. 'I ain't got no menu.' The gentleman gave old Bill here a funny look and asked how the beef was prepared and served."

I was among the crowd here that night. Much to the dapper gentleman's astonishment, and what appeared to be the red-cheeked embarrassment of his lady, the fellas at the bar burst into a chorus of chortles and chuckles. Tiny snorted beer out his nostrils, which sent the bar crew into an uproarious fit of gut-busting laughter. Fortunately, the fellas realized that the city folk were offended and explained that they were laughing at the notion of Bill's cooking fine dinners — and not at the visitors.

"Well, I'll never forget the look in Bill's eyes, how about it? Remember when he said, 'Hey fellas, tell deez fancy folks how we be servin' up our beef here'? And Clancy shouted, 'Naw, Bill, youze tell them. This do be your place.'

"So Bill said, 'Well, then, OK. It's like this, folks. Stanley over there, his beef is with his woman. Always nagging him to find a job so they can get offa welfare and be spectable people. But the guy spent years in the mines so he deserves welfare and black lung benefits, no matter what the missus says. And Tiny down there, his beef is with his boss, a good-fer-nawthin' fancy shmancy biznis man who dresses kind of like youze do in your Sunday best Monday through Friday, though. Man ain't got the time of day for the kind of folks who help him make his money. And my beef, well youze ain't got the time to hear all my beefs so youze better head right back to wherever youze come from, youze hear me?'

"The man and his lady friend looked at old Bill, looked at us with our bellies up to the bar and our ass cheeks hanging off the stools. Then they looked at each other like we was all nuts or something … Hey, Bill, another pint ought to get me through the story."

Sure, Tiny and his drinking buddies thought this was hilarious. However, I felt embarrassed when that nice couple stared at us as though we were aliens. We aren't. We're coalcrackers. Even Bill, although he's not among our most hospitable.

Without a word, the man helped his lady with her Italian lace wrap, and they headed for the door, leaving full glasses of beer and two one-dollar bills on the table.

"OK, I'm ready to finish this tale now. So they go to leave, and Bill said to them, 'Hey, youze, wait, youze are forgettin' your money.' And the rich fella said, 'I assume that two dollars will cover the beverages.' Can ya imagine?

"'That and then some,' Bill told them. And that fella told Bill to keep the change.

"As soon as the door shut them out, Bill hollered, 'Hey, boys, the first two of youze who gits to the table can have them beers, but leave the bills. I'll be puttin' those into Father's collection at Sunday Mass.'

"Those city people sure were dumb, hey fellas?" asks Tiny. "Two dollars for two glasses of beer? Incredible! Those folks must of been filthy rich — just rolling in the loot. Ah well, that's the way of it."

"Hey, Tiny, whatsamatter wit you? I hear you tell that story a lot better before," says Smooth. "Is the wife bitchin' again?"

"Shut up, Smooth. It's not my woman, for a change. Why I'm just sick to death of all these new people in town. Bums, the lot of them. All bums."

"Who youze talkink about?" Stanley guzzled another shot of Kessler's.

I felt embarrassed when that nice couple stared at us as though we were aliens. We aren't. We're coalcrackers.

"Why, those Spanish people, Stanley. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, youze can't believe what I went through today when Annabelle made me go with her to the bank, the post, and the food store. They are everywhere and always ahead of me in line. And they speak that foreign tongue!"

"Hey Tiny? Stop yer bellyaching," Bill hollered. "Old Stanley speaks different from us, and youze get on fine with him. Here, let me fill that pint."

"Cripes, Bill! Stanley here is an American, for crying out loud. Yeah, fill 'er up."

We drank on. Bill was watching CNN and talking about the impending apocalypse. Smooth fell asleep at the bar with his head sideways, mouth

agape. Clancy belted down four more pints, stood up to relieve himself, and walked into the wall while singing the first few lines of "Danny Boy." Stanley stared into the haze and talked to himself about how the Irish and Welsh couldn't make pierogies with a Polish recipe.

Bill pulled the switch on the back bar at 3:45 a.m. Tiny knew it was quitting

"Those city people sure were dumb, hey fellas?" asks Tiny. "Two dollars for two glasses of beer? Incredible!"

time. He stubbed out his Pall Mall, belted down a half-pint of Yuengling, and belched.

"Going home before your missus comes down, Bill."

"Ganight, Tiny," Bill replied. "May God go with youze cause somebody's gotta be leadin' youze home to Coal Street."

"Vatch out for dem foreeners, Tiny."

"Night to youze as well. Yeah, those damn immagrants! What gives them the right to be here, of all places?"

That was the way of it. There was no use arguing with Tiny when all that happened this morning, but I intend to bring up the issue with him this evening.

It's odd that I am still the only one here. Bill has finished reading the obituaries. He read the police blotter, too. I heard him mumbling about thugs and drugs.

I ask Bill where the rest of the faithful clientele are. Too early? Too late? Their wives got them doing chores?

"Hell no, Sam. Don't youze know tonight closes Forty Hours adoration? Even the Bishop is here. I'm surprised Father Shimisky didn't manage to fly in the Pope. Anyway, they'll be here shortly, but they'd all be at church right now." N&T

Christine M. Goldbeck is a published, award-winning poet. Her collection of short stories, A Tribute to O'Hara and Other Stories, *has just been published by McKeever Publications and will be available through minecountry.com and Amazon.com. She lives and writes in Shenandoah, Pa.*

To 'Speak or Not to 'Speak

Whether to include dialect was one of the most troublesome decisions with which I wrangled during the final edit of my book, *A Tribute to O'Hara and Other Stories.* It was years in the making, and like any author whose works are going into print, I wanted to lessen every potential risk that the book would fail.

The book is, after all, a collection of short fiction set in Northeastern Pennsylvania's contemporary coal region. Therefore, I argued with myself, the linguistics of the area should be included in the stories where appropriate. If I wanted to reflect the setting faithfully, using the idiom of the area was essential.

However, I also worried that my fellow coalcrackers would accuse me of making fun of them.

If this were to happen, the book could become my worst marketing nightmare. This fear, which still pinches me now and then, is based in fact. The acclaimed writer and coalcracker John O'Hara was deemed a snob for using it in his stories and successful novels, such as *Appointment in Samarra.*

More recently, people in Shamokin, an old coal mining town in the Appalachian Pennsylvania county of Northumberland, were terribly upset when, in the late 1990s, the web site coalregion.com and its CoalSpeak dictionary were featured in an Associated Press story. Some felt that the article poked fun at the way they talk. Coalcrackers, you see, have long felt themselves inferior in the world beyond the hills in which the little towns are nestled.

Indeed, when I went outside the region to work, I was often told that I talked "funny." What they meant was I talked "uncultured." Being out of the region also taught me how different our lingo is from suburban and urban speech patterns.

If I wanted to reflect the setting faithfully, using the idiom of the area was essential. However, I also worried that my fellow coalcrackers would accuse me of making fun of them. If this were to happen, the book could become my worst marketing nightmare.

Researching regional history and talking with area historians and scholars convinced me to include the anthracite

Christine Goldbeck

Abandoned coal breakers, along with culm banks and CoalSpeak, are relics of the booming anthracite mining days which brought immigrants and their dreams to the Northeastern Pennsylvania coalfields.

patois in my work. If I was portraying the region in historical fact, how could I think about NOT recording the unique speech patterns and terms, they debated. If local historical societies are flourishing, it says something for people wanting to learn about their ancestors and to preserve the local history for future generations. I decided they had raised valid issues, and so, in the final edit, I left much of the dialect used in the stories. However, I cut some terminology because readers — friends living throughout the United States and not native to the coal region — had trouble understanding some words.

The anthracite region of Northeastern Pennsylvania has produced many fine artists, writers, athletes, musicians, and others who have made significant contributions to America's quality of life. Among these: famous Big Band era musicians Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey; John Flannery, who played for the Houston Oilers from 1991-1995 and the Dallas Cowboys in the 1996 and 1997 seasons; Gen. James "Slim Jim" Gavin, commander of the 82nd Airborne division, which jumped into Normandy on D-day, 1944; Mark Oswald, a baritone with the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, who has performed in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *La Bohème;* Stanley Coveleski, inducted into the Baseball

When I went outside the region to work, I was often told that I talked "funny." What they meant was I talked "uncultured."

Hall of Fame in 1969; and Gary S. Becker, Nobel Laureate in economics. There are many famous people who got their start in the anthracite region. Visit coalregion.com and minecountry.com to learn more.

The coal region made social, industrial, and labor history. Indeed, the coal region fueled the Industrial Revolution, and the mineworkers' long fight for safer working conditions was a foundation for organized labor in this country.

Are these things to be ashamed of? Hardly.

So, I might talk funny, but youze don know da half of why. Me family came from Kilkenny during da patayta famine. In da coal reejin, dey worked da mines, and sumovem died der cuz accidents were all the time. My great-grandpap was a fireboss, and his sons were miners, too. I have no reason ta sprag me feet cuz of da way I talk. Me folks were strong and proud, and because dey were brave, people like youze were able to improve da way youze live.

So, I might talk funny, but youze don know da half of why.

If youze ever come here, be sure ta bring yer camra and tons of filem. And stay a coupla days. Climb da coal banks, walk along da crick. Oh, and donchiz forgit ta go down da Lyric and see if dey gotnee halupkies fer dinner.

If people call me to task for using CoalSpeak in my stories, so be it. If nothing else, I have provided a record for future historians and coal region enthusiasts to use in their studies.

— CMG

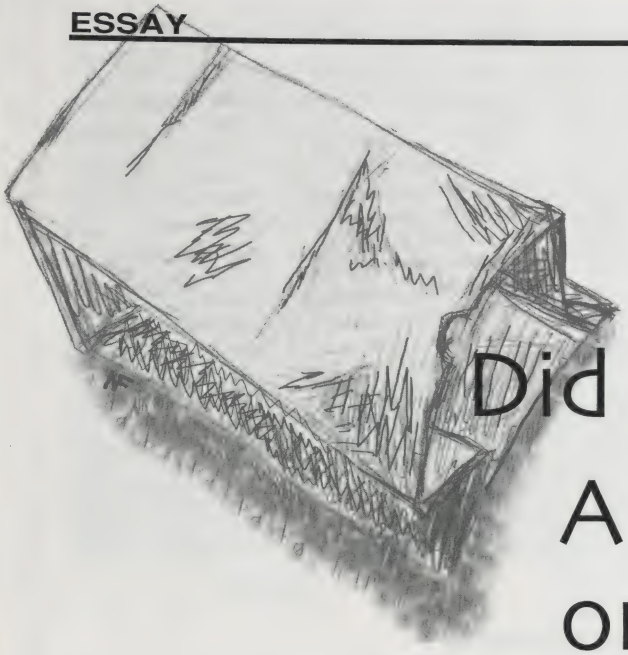
Immaculate Morning

in such a silence,
the wind fallen still,
the shrill notes of high summer insects
chafing in the field,
the immaculate morning air,
elapsing in droplets
ascending in sunlight,
as I too
had wanted to say something
that would carry out, unbent,
through to the other side,
beyond myself,
something I could send down deep
like a hook or anchor
that might catch
then hold to the altar
or to the stones that will not falter,
some way when chancing by
a thousand years from now
I might find as if by random:
a way to travel back
along the limbs of alchemy
free of time,
come back in
to the world
as clear blue ether
then rise in shafts of sunlight,
travel back,
slanting upward from the lilies.

— Robert Carl Williams

Robert Carl Williams spends six months a year practicing architecture in the mountains of Vermont. The other six months of the year he and his wife, Annabelle, sail around the world. Williams grew up in Chattanooga, Tenn., and attended the University of Tennessee and Harvard University. His poems have been published in Now & Then, Comstock Review, Gentle Survivalist, Orion, Verve, WordWrights Magazine, ELF, Nassau Review, *and* Squaw Review.

ESSAY



Did You'uns Hear *That?* A Pokeful of Notes on Accent

by Bill Dockery

A *you'uns* kind of guy from Sevierville, Tenn., tries to figure out what to make of accents — his own and everyone else's.

When you argue about religion, you're obliged to own up to your own spiritual background before you can launch a critical salvo at someone else's religious practices. Likewise, when you intend to say something about the way other people talk, you'll be on firmer ground if you 'fess up to your own linguistic heritage — or at least the parts about which you actually have some awareness and knowledge.

I was born in 1949, the oldest child of two 40-something old-maid school teachers who got together after World War II to start a family in Sevierville, the county seat of Sevier County, Tenn., on the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Both my father and mother were born in the first decade of the 20th century, and both were the children of subsistence farmers with a heritage in East Tennessee that went back generations to the Revolutionary War. Both were also the first in their families to earn a college degree.

All of this is to say that the linguistic environment in which I grew up was Southern Appalachian middle class, a culture without much in the way of intellectual pretensions but that, nonetheless, valued education.

I was in the equivalent of middle school the first time I can remember being laughed at over the way I said something. Somewhere I had acquired the notion that the word *oil* was pronounced "oh-EE-ul," instead of the "ohl" I was used to hearing. One day, I tried that pronunciation at home on my brother and parents, carefully sounding each element of the oi diphthong. The good-humored laughter that greeted my performance limited my linguistic daring for a good long while.

The pronunciations we used unself-consciously were the same ones we found in that checkout-counter staple, the *How to Talk Southern* dictionary. We said "arn" when we meant the metal, *iron,* and "tar'd" when we were fatigued. We dropped the g on words ending in -ing. Everyone around us did, too.

In high school, my interest shifted to odd words. Older folks would often remark that the word *poke* when it referred to a paper bag or sack was unique to Sevier County. It wasn't. A quick check of a dictionary would have shown that the word dates to the 13th century. Nor was the word derived from the poking motion that one might use to put something in a poke. Its roots actually lay in the Middle English *pocca,* which also gives us the modern word *pocket.*

Jack Rose

Bill Dockery's interest in language dates back to middle school days.

My high school's contingent of Future Farmers of America (FFA) contributed what was considered the locale's other odd lexical item. Even now, when I look at my yearbook and see those guys in the ubiquitous FFA pose—ramrod straight backs, fists clinched over gonads—I'm reminded that each one of them just can't wait to break away from the photo for a smoke and a dope. For the uninitiated, *dope* is FFA-speak for a cola soft drink. Folk etymology attributes the origin of the term to the secret ingredient in early formulations of Coca Cola: a pinch of cocaine.

I would learn later that, as entertaining as these words might be to collect and speculate about, their quaintness didn't take me very far in understanding my culture. But other expressions more mundane and prosaic did have a dimension that said something about where our culture had come from and how it was changing.

Sevierian, *1966*

The Future Farmers of America await a chance for a smoke and a dope.

Though I didn't know it at the time, not everyone called bread *light bread* or milk *sweet milk.* These expressions, with origins deep in the world my parents knew intimately, were actually fossils, artifacts of a rural culture that was passing from the scene.

My mother used to reminisce about how pleased her own mother was when bleached white flour first became widely available because white flour improved the look and texture of her breads and cakes. And in a world where families churned their own butter, buttermilk—or the soured liquid left over after churning the butter from cow's milk—was the norm, and sweet milk—unchurned, unsoured, straight from the cow—was the rarity. Once, not too many decades ago, *store-bought* was the desirably different quality. Now *homemade* and *homegrown* are value-added adjectives.

> The linguistic environment in which I grew up was Southern Appalachian middle class, a culture without much in the way of intellectual pretensions but that, nonetheless, valued education.

What's at work here is identifying what departs from the norm. It is in our nature and the nature of our language to single out for special attention that which is different, whether positive or negative. Often—too often—in making that distinction, we expose our inner values and give markers of our own enlightenment, or lack of it. Our words sometimes spotlight our own provincialism.

Later, in college, I was walking back from the Carson-Newman cafeteria with some of my dorm-mates when I casually asked them whether "you'uns" were going to some event on campus that night. I said it without thinking.

One of my best friends, a Marylander, chortled, "Jeez, Dockery, 'you'uns'? Where are you'uns from?"

In elementary and high school English classes, our teachers had always warned us against using *you-all* or *y'all* as a plural form of *you.* Though I wasn't a *you-all* kind of guy, I'd never worried about it because I had *you'uns.* It solved the basic problem modern English developed when it abandoned *thou* and *thee* as the singular form of the second person pronouns and adopted *you* for addressing either one person or a whole roomful.

I was mortified. Despite the fact that my Maryland friend pronounced *pecan* as if it were a chamber pot (PEE-can) instead of one of the world's most delectable nuts (puh-KON), I accepted his linguistic judgment without question—even though neither *you-all* nor *you'uns* is ungrammatical. I never used *you'uns* again, except in jest.

I had no idea there could be science behind accents until the spring of 1976 when I decided to sign up for a graduate course in English at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. The only evening course that looked halfway interesting was something called Sociolinguistics 4440, taught by a newly minted Ph.D. from Arkansas named Bethany Dumas.

Dumas, an energized and enthusiastic teacher, introduced us to linguists like William Labov, who was turning the study of accents into a science by applying quantitative methods to the language of everyday speakers. He'd tape-record New York cabbies and then count every time they said *dis* for *this* and *dat* for *that.* Then he'd catalog those and other linguistic features and have a pretty good sense of the types of social occasions when these "accents" would appear. It sounds dull, but the course upended all I thought I knew about my native tongue.

In short order, I learned that "accents"

are more properly called dialects, that each dialect communicates adequately when used in its own community of speakers, that dialects can be ranked according to their formality or informality, and that "correct" speech and writing is just another dialect of the mother tongue which happens to have been anointed as the "proper" one. Accents are relative: Everyone has one when compared to speakers of another dialect, and no one — despite what Midwesterners think — is accent-free.

Though I wasn't a *you-all* kind of guy, I'd never worried about it because I had *you'uns.*

The most radical result of this notion of language was what it meant about African American speech. Black vernacular English couldn't be considered some deficient, incorrect version of standard English. It was not endangering the intelligence or cognitive abilities of its speakers when they used it, as popular theory of the time supposed. Worse, the social judgments we as a society were making about speakers of black vernacular English or other nonstandard varieties of English were based on our own attitudes about the speakers and not on any actual deficiencies in their ability to communicate or to think.

The first fruit of this new knowledge was to make me something of a bore at parties. When a soirée got a little slow, I'd casually mention to one of the elementary school teachers in the group that black vernacular English was *not* an inferior version of standard English but was instead a separate dialect that stood on its own and was entirely sufficient for communication in the community of its users. This move would provoke such profound and prolonged arguments that eventually my friends threatened to ban me from future parties if the subject came up again.

If the sufficiency of nonstandard English threatened my pals in education, it actually was just as disturbing to me, if the truth be told. After all, I had always been a good grammarian, and as I moved into the writing and editing industry, catching mistakes and correcting spelling and grammatical errors was my stock in trade. If all dialects were sufficient for communication, why should someone else pay me to fix their prose? And on what basis could I claim my edits made a text better?

Ultimately, I realized that Dumas' course also resolved the crisis it provoked. If we communicate in a linguistic environment that responds negatively to nonstandard speech or writing, then the job of an editor is to make a text acceptable so that it communicates fully to readers and listeners, whatever the preconceptions about dialect they bring to the message.

That's not to devalue the authenticity or integrity of ethnic, regional or other nonstandard dialects. They give our broader society a diversity that enriches and entertains us and offers the possibilities of new insights. No, as an editor or writer, I was forced to recognize that context defines what variety of a language I use to communicate, and a writer's or editor's role is to be sure that the dialect is appropriate to the setting.

Having received enlightenment and mended my recalcitrant attitude toward people with other accents, it would seem that my heart would be obnoxiously pure and my ears would hear without regard to race, sex, creed, or national origin.

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Not so.

Recently, I took in a conference where about 40 writers and editors gathered to talk about science journalism. The setting was a Spartan church conference center (no television, limited phone and computer access) where sooner or later during the six-day event, you ended up talking to everyone.

Writers from all over the country attended, from the Pacific Northwest to D.C., from Chicago to Santa Fe. Of course, several remarked on my "Southern" accent. (Remembering my friends at the parties, I resisted the impulse to tell them it was South Midlands, not Southern.) A writer from the Netherlands thought I might be Australian, which amused the writer whose roots were in Australia. The Japanese scientist doing research in Paris giggled when another Southeasterner and I tried to resurrect our high school French.

If all dialects were sufficient for communication, why should someone else pay me to fix their prose?

During the last 36 hours of the conference, I realized that there were at least two people I hadn't introduced myself to: a young man and woman, each with names and complexions suggesting they were from India. Anticipating difficulties understanding their accents, I decided to skip introductions and let us go our separate ways without ever meeting.

But that's not how it ended. At the final lunch, I wound up eating with the young man. He sounded more like Dan Rather than I did, and, furthermore, he seemed to appreciate my attempts to be funny. Later I bumped into the woman in a hallway and found that she, too was a native speaker of American English. Drawing on her publishing expertise would have enhanced my experience at the conference, and she was an agreeable, pleasant person, to boot, but the opportunity was gone.

The loss was mine, and the fault was mine. I missed out on knowing people who might have laughed at my one-liners or enriched my life in other unknown — and now unknowable — ways. N&T

Bill Dockery writes about science and technology for the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

On the Pronunciation of *Appalachia*

by Anita Puckett

You can raise hackles by how you say a single vowel in the word *Appalachia.*

One day during the spring 1998 semester, I took my Virginia Tech Appalachian folk culture class on a field trip to visit a potter. Originally from Illinois, the gentleman has lived and worked near Blacksburg, Va., for over 20 years and is very knowledgeable about the history and lore of Southern Appalachian pottery-making. After his demonstration, I queried the students to gauge the presentation's success. One young man from Southwest Virginia dismissed the entire expedition as having had no merit. "Once he said *Appalāchia,"* he explained, "I knew he had nothing to say to me."

This student is subscribing to a belief among many regional native-born residents, especially in Central and Southern Appalachia: They are certain they can readily categorize individuals as "one of us" or "not one of us" based on how they say the word *Appalachia.* Those falling into the "one of us" group pronounce *Appalachia* with a short a (ă) in the stressed third syllable. The "not one of us" people say the word as the potter did, with a long a (ā) in the same spot.

Certainly this categorization of individuals by native-born Appalachians is a form of stereotyping. Individuals such as my student are, after all, labeling those who say *Appalāchia* as ignorant people whose knowledge about the region can be dismissed. Allow me to suggest, however, that this student's comment captures much more than an unthinking, oversimplified prejudgment of another person. It also reveals the underlying processes by which a speaker's pronunciation of a single vowel in a single word can help construct social boundaries between "insiders" and "outsiders," define ethnic identities, and establish social and political hierarchies.

Some Linguistic History

Although there is no detailed study of the regional distribution of the two pronunciations, we know that how a person says the word is related to where he or she grew up. I found this to be true when I informally queried about 45 individuals from various backgrounds and parts of the country. I interviewed them in person in Blacksburg, Va., in phone conversations, and in the Appalachian Studies classes I teach.

Those who say *Appalāchia* today tend to be from the northern or western states, including Appalachian portions of Pennsylvania, New York, and some parts of West Virginia. Those preferring *Appalăchia* tend to be from Southern or Central Appalachia or from the South in general. Also favoring the ă pronunciation are Appalachian and Southern migrants currently living in Northern cities who still exhibit Southern Appalachian or Southern speech patterns.

Appalachia evolved from 16th century Spanish explorers' use of a Native American word for an Indian village in Florida.

The history of the use of the word *Appalachia* offers insight as to why the word's pronunciation is so significant to Southern Appalachian residents. David Walls wrote the definitive article on the word's history, "On the Naming of Appalachia," published in 1977 in *An Appalachian Symposium: Essays Written in*

Courtesy of Anita Puckett

Students in Anita Puckett's Appalachian folk culture class at Virginia Tech snap beans in an exercise to demonstrate place, interfamily bonding, and gender roles. These students, depending on where they grew up, regard the pronunciation of *Appalachia* as a marker to identify those who do or do not have anything of value to say to them.

Honor of Cratis D. Williams, edited by J.W. Williamson. In this article, Walls documented how *Appalachia* evolved from 16th century Spanish explorers' use of a Native American word for an Indian village in Florida, most often spelled in the Spaniards' journals as *Apalache.* Ignorance about eastern Northern American topography led 16th and 17th century Spanish and French mapmakers to label all of the Southern mountains as some variant of the word *Apalatcy.* As late as 1911, *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia* reflected this Spanish origin by noting that *Appalachia* "was first applied by the Spaniards to the extreme southern part of the system" and is sometimes spelled with only one p, consistent with its Spanish spelling. The ă form is also consistent with the way *Apalachiacola* and *Apalachee* are said, both Florida geographical place names sharing a common origin with *Appalachia.* Since the ă form is found in all three words, it may reflect how the word was originally pronounced.

Appalachians or Alleghenies?

By the late 18th century, cartographers were, for the most part, dividing the Appalachian Mountains into two separate domains: a northern section extending from New England to the southern Virginia border and a southern part stretching from North Carolina into Georgia, roughly coinciding with the Great Smoky Mountains and surrounding ranges. Walls points out that the Southern region became known by a Latinized variant of *Apalatcy: Appalachia* or the *Appalachians.* The northern subregion was labeled *Alleghenia* or *Alleghenies.* A few Northern-born speakers I interviewed, originally hailing from New York, Michigan, and central Ohio, still maintain this distinction.

Interestingly, in the first authorized dictionary of American English published back in 1828, the New England lexicographer Noah Webster did not include the word *Appalachia* at all. He labeled the entire geological region as the Alleghenies, thus suggesting that *Appalachia* was not a suitable entry for an American English dictionary. Webster's favoring the Northern term for the mountain region was essentially a political act, excluding the Spanish word from the authorized American vocabulary. Here, then, is an important and early insight into why the pronunciation of the word *Appalachia* has become such an emotional issue for many Central and Southern Appalachians. If lexicographers did not think of *Appalachia* as an American word, then the use of that word by people living in parts of the region was at least nonstandard, if not unacceptable, by educated elites.

Despite Webster's pronouncement, various geographers continued to use — and refine the usage of — the word *Appalachia.* By the late 1800s, John Wesley Powell, the U.S. Geological Survey's first director, classified the Eastern Seaboard mountains as *Appalachian* and the plateau west of those mountains as the *Allegheny Plateau.* As a result, many U.S. English speakers and dictionaries began applying *Appalachia* to denote the entire Eastern U.S. mountain range, while many others continued the older usage and employed the term to describe only the region's southern portion. All of the early 20th century dictionaries I consulted, including several recently published editions, list meanings that refer to the entire mountain range. While most of the Northern speakers I interviewed support this usage of *Appalachia* and say the word indicates only the mountain range, just three of the 30 Southern speakers limited their definitions to a landform. The remaining 27 Southern speakers also mentioned that *Appalachians* could also mean the region's residents.

According to Walls, no published usage referred to people living in the region as *Appalachians* until former librarian Horace Kephart applied that adjective to mountaineers in his classic 1913 study of life in the Great Smoky Mountains, *Our Southern Highlanders.* Prior to that time, various general labels — such as *Cohee,* meaning a British descendent living west of the Blue Ridge mountains — were applied, but these were not usually linked closely to geography. Residents and outsiders simply had no name for Appalachians, although people sometimes used colony or state names, such as "Pennsylvanian" or "Virginian."

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Kephart, of course, was subscribing to a view that first came into existence during the post-Civil War period: Southern Appalachian whites were members of a distinct culture that was both exotic and a remnant of the past. With highly popular local color writers such as John Fox Jr. and Mary Noailles Murfree leading the way, influential individuals and organizations came into the region from elsewhere and attributed — with varying degrees of accuracy — specific ancestries, customs, material and folk traditions, religious orientations, and speech patterns to white residents.

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until the 1960s when the region became one of the main battlefields in the War on Poverty, declared by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. Over the next several decades, *Appalachia* with the long ā has become the nationally preferred pronunciation in large part because most governmental, media, and anti-

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poverty workers working in the region came from parts of the country using the ā form. In fact, this ā form is the more common pronunciation used by Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) administrators; Congress established the ARC in 1965 to support economic and social development in the 13-state region, from southern New York state to northern Mississippi, that the commission defines as Appalachia.

The word *Appalāchia,* then, became synonymous with the residents of the Central and Southern parts of that region, nearly all of whom were presumed to be impoverished and white. This shift in meaning is again reflected in several American English dictionaries that now define the word as referring to the white residents of the region. For example, *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary,* published in 1983, defines *Appalachian* as "a white native or resident of the Appalachian mountain area." The Third College edition of *Webster's New World Dictionary* proclaims that Appalachia is "the highland region of the E[astern] U.S. … characterized generally by economic depression and poverty."

Many people in Southern Appalachian communities responded to the intense and usually negative coverage the War on Poverty inspired during the 1960s and 1970s by fighting back. Residents have, in various ways, developed regional views and strategies for countering popular distorted images by portraying their communities and the region in a more positive, accurate light. Offering their own definitions of what *Appalachia* should

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Taking Sides

Many regional educators, local media broadcasters, and government officials have taken a leadership role in insisting that the Appalăchia pronunciation is the correct one. It is the pronunciation they use in Appalachian cultural heritage programs in elementary and secondary schools and in various Appalachian Studies programs in regional colleges and universities. Regional performers and artists as well as Appalshop productions employ the ă pronunciation. Taken together, these efforts

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Lee Smith

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Fred Chappell

"***Now & Then*** keeps me in touch and informed, and is a must for anyone interested in the past, present, and future of the region."

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This designation of Southern Appalachia as a nationally recognized regional culture is critical to the current social, political, and cultural significance now attributed to the pronunciations of *Appalachia.* When a region becomes associated with characteristics of a specific culture, and vice versa, then how a person pronounces the name of that region acquires certain associations and significance. A given pronunciation is linked to views about the members of that regional culture, views held both by Appalachians and non-Appalachians. For Appalachia, this post-Civil War designation became either highly romanticized or highly negative in the popular imagination. This led, in turn, to how some regional residents responded to the way people pronounce *Appalachia.*

Gaining Currency

However, *Appalachia* did not achieve widespread currency until the 1960s when the region became one of the main battlefields in the War on Poverty, declared by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. Over the next several decades, *Appalachia* with the long ā has become the nationally preferred pronunciation in large part because most governmental, media, and anti-

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The word *Appalāchia,* then, became synonymous with the residents of the Central and Southern parts of that region, nearly all of whom were presumed to be impoverished and white. This shift in meaning is again reflected in several American English dictionaries that now define the word as referring to the white residents of the region. For example, *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary,* published in 1983, defines *Appalachian* as "a white native or resident of the Appalachian mountain area." The Third College edition of *Webster's New World Dictionary* proclaims that Appalachia is "the highland region of the E[astern] U.S. … characterized generally by economic depression and poverty."

Many people in Southern Appalachian communities responded to the intense and usually negative coverage the War on Poverty inspired during the 1960s and 1970s by fighting back. Residents have, in various ways, developed regional views and strategies for countering popular distorted images by portraying their communities and the region in a more positive, accurate light. Offering their own definitions of what *Appalachia* should mean, they present a picture of the region consistent with their senses of personal and cultural identity. For instance, a local Southeastern Kentucky woman I know reported that she successfully sued *The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal* for mistakenly portraying her children as dirty and poor (they'd been playing in the creek). Other scholars and community activists formed the Appalachian Studies Association as well as watchdog groups such as Appalshop, the Whitesburg, Ky.-based media arts and cultural center, and the online Silicon Holler e-journal for Southern Appalachia (accessible at www.webgranny.org). Appalachians have made better use of the media and the courts, produced scholarly and policy publications, and developed and implemented educational curriculums at all levels.

At about this time, *Appalăchia* became the way that experts said the word, experts who were, for the most part, from the region and who were personally and professionally committed to changing negative images about life in the mountains. The ā pronunciation became equated with outsiders who insisted on assuming that the region was a place of unrelenting poverty peopled by backward, hopeless folk badly in need of the outsiders' expertise and assistance. People who said *Appalāchia* were perceived, in short, as outsiders who didn't know what they were talking about but were more than willing to tell people from the mountains what to do and how they should do it.

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During a recent phone conversation, I discovered that the staff at the Appalachian Volunteers of Boston College, a campus organization that provides Central and Southern Appalachian service opportunities for students, draws similar conclusions from the way people pronounce *Appalachia.* A staff worker, originally from Norfolk, Va., stated that *App-a-lā-sha,*

pronounced with a "sh" sound in the last syllable, was the correct pronunciation. She assumed *Appalăchia* was "colloquial" and incorrect.

Yet despite all of these feelings on both sides of the pronunciation issue, there is one fact we must keep in mind: Most residents of the region rarely use the word *Appalachia* in their day-to-day interactions with friends and neighbors. Part of the reason for this resides in the dialect's basic characteristics.

Most Central and Southern Appalachians speak a regional vernacular many call "country," "mountain," or "hillbilly" talk; sociolinguists, those scholars who study the effects of social factors on language patterns, refer to it as Appalachian English. This vernacular's underlying sound-and-stress patterns don't lend themselves to either pronunciation of *Appalachia.* Mountain talk prefers one-syllable words, such as *truck,* or two-syllable words spoken with the stress on the first syllable, as in *mountain,* or with the stress on both syllables, as in *graveyard.* In addition, words that end in "a" in other American English

Many regional educators, local media broadcasters, and government officials have taken a leadership role in insisting that the Appalāchia pronunciation is the correct one.

dialects tend to be changed to a long e sound, as when *opera* becomes *opry.* So as soon as someone uses the word *Appalāchia* in conversation to refer to nearby places and communities, locals can be fairly sure the speaker is someone who "isn't from around here." Not only is the speaker from elsewhere, but many local speakers perceive the person as someone who is "putting us down" or who "thinks they're better than we are." Conversely, speaking in the local vernacular establishes the individual's "right" to a place in local life, defines their ethnicity, if you will.

For example, over several years' residence in a rural Southeastern Kentucky community as a linguistic anthropologist and community resident, I came to realize that while each pronunciation of *Appalachia* had its own distinctive meaning, both had essentially negative connotations. Residents of this particular community clearly associate the ā form with media "spies," government officials, and missionary "do-gooders" who "don't know nothing about us." They use *Appalāchia* or *Appalāchian* to parody these outsiders. The people of this rural community use the ā form to draw the line clearly between "insiders" who know how to use the ă variant and "outsiders" who do not.

However, even when an insider in this community calls someone an Appalachian and uses the correct ă pronunciation, it doesn't tend to be a compliment. The most benign, though uncommon, usage of the word in this part of Eastern Kentucky occurs when someone uses it to talk about an Appalachian Studies class some family member is taking at the local community college. More often, people consider the speech of those teachers and other professionals who are comfortable using *Appalăchia* or *Appalăchian* as "proper" talk or "talking proper." According to the views of most community residents, people who talk proper belong to a different socioeconomic class than they do and probably look down on them.

This usage pattern changed dramatically when I became a full-time faculty member at a local community college with an Appalachian Studies center. In this more circumscribed academic setting, people strongly preferred the Appalăchia pronunciation and routinely used it to denote regional residents. There were consistent efforts to promulgate this pronunciation of *Appalachia,* no matter what the context — in classroom instruction, regional media productions, fine arts enrichment, applied research, and personal conversation. Both faculty and students considered the ă pronunciation a positively valued symbol of membership in and knowledge about the region. Students from the region I've encountered at Virginia Tech — including the young man who expressed such disdain for the potter — report having had similar experiences at their high schools or local community colleges.

A Mirror Image

Native-born residents of the Pennsylvania coalfields and some West Virginia areas, of course, generally say Appalāchia in contrast to the Central Appalachia coalfields. When it comes to meaning, Northern residents from both inside and outside Appalachia seem less consistent about whether the word should refer to regional residents.

Thirteen of the 15 respondents of Northern origin but not from Northern Appalachia did not use the word to refer to the region's residents. One stated he would never think to use the word to refer to regional residents. For residents from or living in Central or Southern Appalachia, he said he would use the word *hillbilly* or, perhaps, *redneck* instead.

More striking, and needing much more investigation, is how professionals working with Central and Southern Appalachian

People who said *Appalāchia* were perceived as outsiders who didn't know what they were talking about but were more than willing to tell people from the mountains what to do and how they should do it.

service organizations headquartered in Northern cities pronounce and evaluate the word. Two respondents employed by the Boston College Appalachian Volunteers, for example (three, counting Elizabeth Fine's senior seminar participant) used the word *Appalachia* both to refer to the mountain chain and to the disadvantaged (as they perceive them) residents living in the region's central and southern portions. One of these two stated that those saying *Appalăchia* were uneducated. A second stated that she had switched to *Appalăchia* to be respectful of local people with whom she was working.

Regardless of their stance, these three respondents clearly perceive Southern Appalachian residents as different from themselves and, in fact, inferior in some respects. Variations,

then, in pronunciation and meaning by Northerners living both inside and outside Appalachia are in some ways a mirror image of those found in Southern Appalachia. Some Northerners involved in Central and Southern Appalachia projects tend to see

There is one fact we must keep in mind: Most residents of the region rarely use the word *Appalachia* in their day-to-day interactions with friends and neighbors.

Appalāchia as correct and *Appalăchia* as wrong, exactly reversing the way Central and Southern Appalachians see the situation. These respondents use the word to determine who's "one of us" and who is not—just as my student did.

When the student in the Appalachian Studies class dismissed the potter as incompetent, then, he was stereotyping him. It was, however, a classificatory act made in accordance with values his Southwest Virginia upbringing had assigned to the use of the ā vowel in *Appalachia.* This upbringing had taught him that how the potter pronounced the word could help the student evaluate the outsider's "right" to talk about Appalachian pottery and its history. The student also believed that the potter's pronunciation told him something about the potter's attitude towards Appalachian residents. The values assigned to *Appalāchia,* all negative in this case, were the legacy of hundreds of years of speakers' utterances of the word *Appalachia* in various contexts, reflecting specific cultural interpretations and language use traditions on both sides of the pronunciation fence.

Whether consciously aware of the derivation and perpetuation of these interpretations or not, both the student's and the three non-Appalachian respondents' negative reactions to the pronunciation of *Appalachia* show how important and how complex the relationship is between language and culture—even when talking about a single sound. N&T

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ESSAY

Can't Pronounce *Appalachia?* Then Don't Mess With Us

by Amy Clark

A fellow from Northern Virginia shows all the sensitivity some natives of the mountains have come to expect from people who say *Appalāchia.*

Most people I've encountered have used the words *lovely* and *charming* to describe my Appalachian dialect. But there's always the exception.

I've been the victim of stereotyping more than once because of the way I speak. I was having dinner with a couple of folks from Northern Virginia not long ago when one of them (a fellow I had just met) burst into laughter. Now, that would have been just fine, except that what I was talking about wasn't really that funny. I'm attuned to this kind of response by now, so I laughed along and said, "It must be my Southern dialect."

"Oh, that's not Southern," he chuckled. "That's hillbilly."

What I wanted to say (and didn't) is that "Southern," one

I translated this fellow's remark as follows: "Frankly, my dear, you're no Scarlett O'Hara. You're Elly May Clampett."

of four major regional dialects in our country, can be broken down into types. Alabama Southern, for example, sounds much different from Savannah, Ga., Southern, which is nothing like East Tennessee (or "hillbilly," if you prefer) Southern. But too many are quick to offer a correction when they hear a Central Appalachian call herself "Southern." For some

reason, it's assumed we don't belong in that category because we're too far north.

Appalachian mystery writer Sharyn McCrumb says that many mistakenly think of *Gone With the Wind* when they think of the South. So I translated this fellow's remark as follows: "Frankly, my dear, you're no Scarlett O'Hara. You're Elly May Clampett." But I decided not to turn this fellow's misguided attempt at wit into a teachable moment. I was too busy imagining myself with pigtails, an ample bosom encased in a tight checked blouse, and wearing frayed denim shorts with a jug of corn-squeezins at my elbow. I must admit it was an amusing picture.

I was explaining how many professionals are concentrated in my Southwest Virginia town of Wise when he burst into laughter again, suggesting that the only "profession" we have is moonshining.

In the meantime, our conversation shifted to demographics. I was explaining how many professionals are concentrated in my Southwest Virginia town of Wise when he burst into laughter again, suggesting that the only "profession" we have is moonshining. A lecture on logical fallacies seemed appropriate, but I simply smiled and pointed to a picture conveniently hanging near our booth that had no business in a Mexican restaurant. It was probably a cheap alternative to a Diego Rivera mural, but I like to think fate placed it there. The photograph depicted a weather-beaten cabin, complete with a washtub hanging on the front porch and an entire wall of the house draped in kudzu.

"You're absolutely right about the moonshine business," I laughed along, gesturing to the picture. "As a matter of fact," I added, switching into the thickest I-don't-give-a-hoot-what-you-think Appalachian dialect I could muster as I hooked a thumb toward the picture, "this looks just like the house I grew up in — except you can't see the moonshine still or the outhouse in the back."

For a true Appalachian, "Appa-lay-shun" is equivalent to fingernails on a chalkboard.

Regardless of the fact that my remark brought a round of polite chuckles, I knew I had made my point. But that didn't seem to matter. For his part, he was bound and determined to turn this into a teachable moment. "That's an interesting Appalachian dialect you have there," he said, pronouncing it "Appa-lay-shun." Whenever I hear such a pronunciation, I feel as though the speaker is trying to assert his or her own sophistication, a sophistication that our area is presumed to lack. For a true Appalachian, it's equivalent to fingernails on a chalkboard.

M.T. Photography

Lee County, Va., is home not only to moonshine stills and outhouses but also to some scenic spots like this recently built log home near the one where Amy Clark grew up.

"It's Central 'Appal-at-chan,' yes," I answered firmly, sliding in the short a sound.

He looked at me, his fork suspended in midair. "Whatever," he said dryly.

Like the television character, Ally McBeal, whose visions of retribution are played out for the viewers, I imagined pulling his lip up over his head while saying, "This here's what we hillbillies do to you'uns that pokes fun at us." Elly May Clampett would have taken him down for sure. But I'm too dignified for that. The irony of where intelligence really lies in situations like this is enough for me. I'd like to believe I handled his biting sarcasm with the dignity of a true Appalachian (middle a as in "cat," thank you) woman.

Though we may represent two different brands of Southern, I think Scarlett would have been proud. N&T

Amy Clark is an instructor of English and oral communication at the University of Virginia's College at Wise as well as a weekly columnist with the Bristol Herald-Courier, *which published an earlier version of this essay.*

The Hard Girl

by Kathy L. May

Denise Floyd lay curled up on her bed, reading a magazine folded to hide the cover. When she heard Mary Lou flapping down the hall in plastic thongs, she slid the magazine under her pillow and sat up.

"Mama thinks you're getting ready," Mary Lou said. "I've already got my bathing suit on under my clothes."

"So?" Denise yawned.

"Are you reading? I'm going to tell."

Denise looked up at her little sister's heavily made-up face.

"If you do, I'll tell you've been in Mom's make-up."

"I've got my own make-up now. Beverly gave it to me," Mary Lou said.

"Well, I bet Mom won't let you keep it. You look weird."

"You look like a worm. That's what I heard the kids call you. Bookworm. Big ugly worm. I'm going to tell."

After Mary Lou ran out of the room, Denise heard her mother's voice. "Beverly, take that child and wash that make-up off her. Haven't I asked you not to give things to the girls without asking me first? And Denise, I could use some help." Denise sneaked one last look at the magazine, then rolled off the bed.

In the kitchen, her mother was packing a wicker picnic basket. "You can fold these napkins," Mrs. Floyd said to Denise as Beverly and Mary Lou emerged from the bathroom, the little girl red-eyed from crying, Beverly expressionless around Mrs. Floyd as usual.

"Straighten up the girls' room, will you, Beverly? Then I'll need you in here," said Mrs. Floyd.

"I'll help her, Mama," Mary Lou said.

Denise stiffened, remembering the magazine under the pillow.

"Mom," she asked, "can I change into my new blouse?"

"Yes, dear. That would be nice."

Before Denise could stop her, Beverly walked into their bedroom and started straightening Denise's bed. Denise saw the pages of the magazine flutter and flip shut, revealing the cover picture of a woman struggling in a man's embrace and the title in bold, red letters — *True Romance.*

"Well, I've been looking all over for this," Beverly said.

Denise closed the bedroom door and faced Beverly with pleading eyes.

"You stole Beverly's magazine," Mary Lou taunted. "You been reading love stories."

Beverly looked at the two girls and hesitated. "Mary Lou, listen. You can keep some more lipsticks if you don't let your mama find out. Look, here in this drawer," she said, pulling open one of the two dresser drawers that were allotted to her in the girls' room.

Denise thought Beverly looked like a movie star. In shorts and a T-shirt, her figure was like the curvy hourglass shape Denise had seen boys make with their hands.

Denise thought Beverly looked like a movie star. In shorts and a T-shirt, her figure was like the curvy hourglass shape Denise had seen boys make with their hands. And when she put on make-up, she looked as exotic as Jayne Mansfield. Her hair was exotic too. Platinum, Beverly called it. She rolled it in pink plastic curlers and slept in them every night.

Mary Lou was singing to herself, arranging the brass tubes of lipstick on the dresser. "Can I have the Orange Kiss, Beverly, and the Yum Yum, too?" Mary Lou asked.

"As long as you don't tell on your sister. And if you do, I swear I'll never rat your hair again."

Denise rushed over to the young woman and hugged her. Beverly squeezed the girl's shoulders and started making the bed. "Honey, I don't mind sharing my stories. But if your mother knew, she'd let me go in a minute. Anyway, those magazines are for grown-up people." Beverly fluffed the pillows.

"You're not grown-up," Denise said.

"I'm seventeen, and that's close enough. I'll be getting married one of these days. Find me a man with a good job hauling coal or something. Then I won't have to work. Yes, ma'am, I'll just stay home all day and watch stories on TV, and when my husband comes home, we'll go eat at the drive-in," Beverly said.

During the week, Mary Lou and Denise and Beverly shared the same pink-and-white bedroom. The girls had matching twin beds with spreads and dust ruffles in a pattern of delicate pink flowers that matched the wallpaper. Beverly slept on a rollaway bed she let down at night and folded up again in the morning. On Saturday evenings, they drove Beverly home, and on Sunday nights, one of her boyfriends usually brought her back to their house again.

"Did you have a boyfriend when you were my age?" Denise asked.

"Let's see. You about twelve? I guess I did. Sam Messer never would leave me alone when we lived in Cliff. But girl, things are different for you. You can be something someday, marry a rich man who'll treat you right," Beverly said.

Denise remembered seeing Beverly kissing a man in a car parked outside their house one night. Later on, Beverly slipped into their room, and her voice was sweet and low as a clarinet when she said good night.

Denise and Mary Lou sat on either side of Beverly in the back seat of the Floyds' car while Mrs. Floyd sat up front with the food and her husband. Mary Lou rummaged through the paper shopping bag that Beverly used as a suitcase.

"Oooh, Beverly. This is beautiful," Mary Lou said, holding up a handful of hot pink cloth.

"Mary Lou, put that back and stop getting in other people's stuff," Mrs. Floyd said.

"Oh, that's all right, Mrs. Floyd," Beverly mumbled, closing the bag.

"Is it a brassiere?" Mary Lou asked.

"No, honey, that's the top to a two-piece bathing suit. For laying out in the sun."

"Oh, you can get a suntan on your tummy. Mama, I want a bathing suit like Beverly's."

"Don't say tummy, Mary Lou," said Denise. "That's baby talk."

The car rattled across the one-lane swinging bridge above the narrow, muddy river that divided the mountain town. They drove over the railroad tracks and past the lumberyard. The houses over here were small and old, their white paint faded to weathered gray or covered with imitation brick siding. Some children playing in the gravel roads moved aside to let the car pass. You couldn't roller skate over here. No sidewalks. And there wasn't much grass in any of the small front yards. But almost every house had a vegetable garden flourishing beside or behind it. Denise saw women bending over the green rows and old men sitting on porches.

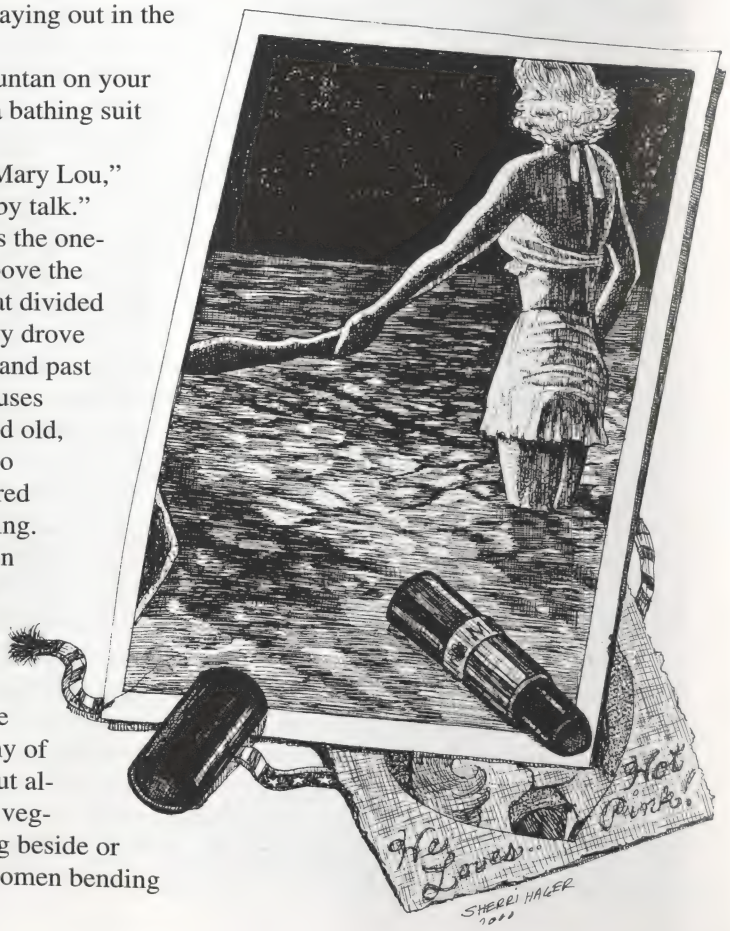
They drove over the railroad tracks and past the lumberyard. The houses over here were small and old, their white paint faded to weathered gray or covered with imitation brick siding.

Mr. Floyd slowed down near a row of mailboxes where a dirt road full of ruts and potholes led into a narrow hollow. "You can just let me out here," Beverly said.

"Give us a call if you can't get a ride back to the house," Mrs. Floyd said. She fumbled in her purse and passed some rolled-up bills to the girl.

"Thank you, Mrs. Floyd. You all have a good Fourth of July," Beverly said.

Denise sat on the ground behind a boulder that hid her from the others. She was daydreaming, wishing she could have finished the story in *True Romance*. She looked out toward the lake and saw two rowboats way out in the middle where her father was fishing with the other office managers from the coal company. Denise's mother and the other wives hovered over picnic tables covered with casserole dishes and paper plates of half-eaten food. Most of the children were splashing in a shallow inlet



of the man-made lake, heads bobbing above orange life jackets. The smaller ones, toddlers and crawlers, played near the tables of women.

"Oh, Sue, you're so lucky with that Beverly," Denise heard a woman tell her mother. "You can get her to do some work. Our hired girl is half the time mooning over some boy, and I just can't keep her off the phone."

Hired girl. Before Denise had learned to read, to sort out the sounds of i's and a's, she had thought her mother was saying "hard" girl. She had figured that the women who came to live with them and clean their house and look after her and Mary Lou were "hard" girls because they did the hard work, "hard" because they came from little falling-down houses across the river or way out in the country on the side of a mountain.

Denise's mother and the other wives hovered over picnic tables covered with casserole dishes and paper plates of half-eaten food.

But Beverly wasn't hard. Even though she mopped and washed and scrubbed, she also made chocolate fudge when Mr. and Mrs. Floyd went out at night. She fixed Mary Lou's long hair in elaborate styles. She let Denise read *Nancy Drew* in bed at night with a flashlight and never said a word about it. Every weekday after school, the three of them watched *Queen for a Day* on TV and cheered as Jack Bailey presented a new washing machine and a mink coat to the woman with the saddest story. Once Denise and Mary Lou marched from the linen closet to the living room and draped Beverly's shoulders with a white satin sheet and crowned her queen by clasping a rhinestone necklace on top of her head.

The children, whining now with weariness, slowly straggled up from the beach. Their mothers struggled with the ties and buckles of the clumsy life jackets, toweled the heads and small bodies dry.

"Denise," her mother called over to her. "You're the oldest. Don't you know some game or story for these kids?"

"She's such a mature child," one of the women said, while the others murmured in agreement. The group of children gathered on the grass around Denise.

The women missed Act One, in which Jimmy Joe Clark put a Cracker Jack ring on Mary Lou's finger and married her. Some of them caught the end of Act Two, where the young couple was having a soggy cookie dinner with their baby, a two-year-old who sat gnawing a rock in the cleared space that was their stage. In Act Three, the rest of the women came over when Mary Lou began to wail. The baby, who was lying down but would not close her eyes, was supposed to be dead. Then Jimmy Joe reappeared, staggering and stumbling with a dirt-caked beer bottle in his hand. Some of the women giggled. He'd been fired, he said, and Mary Lou wailed louder.

The men were beaching their boats and calling to their wives during Act Four, when Denise came on in her role as the "other woman."

"You took my man away. But he's mine. He loves me," Denise announced melodramatically, her face wet with lake water tears.

"He does not," Mary Lou stamped her foot. "You're just a ..." She paused, trying to remember the words Denise had taught her. "An old bitch," she said.

The women gasped.

"What in the world?"

"Well, I never ..."

After Mrs. Floyd pulled her protesting children toward the company car, Mr. Floyd, slightly drunk and smelling of dead fish, steered them onto the road.

"I had no idea she was still bringing those trashy magazines into our home," Mrs. Floyd said.

"Now, settle down, Sue," Mr. Floyd said.

"I've tried to raise my girls right, and look what happens."

Then Jimmy Joe reappeared, staggering and stumbling with a dirt-caked beer bottle in his hand. Some of the women giggled. He'd been fired, he said, and Mary Lou wailed louder.

"Didn't know it was a bad word," Mary Lou sobbed.

Denise and Mary Lou, sent to their room, sat on their pink-and-white twin beds. Mary Lou folded and rearranged her Barbie doll costumes while Denise turned the pages of a *National Geographic.* They could hear the neighborhood children calling to each other outside in the last games of the evening.

"I don't guess we get to see the fireworks," Mary Lou sighed. "But you know what, Denise? I've got some sparklers. We could turn out the lights."

"OK. But wait till Beverly comes back."

The girls lay in the bed, listening to the firecrackers popping in the street. Hours later, Denise woke in the dark and found Beverly on her knees rummaging through boxes on the floor, two shopping bags filled with her clothes.

"Beverly, what are you doing?" Denise asked.

Beverly rose clumsily and settled herself on the edge of Denise's bed. She looked a mess — one side of her hair smashed flat and hanging in strings, the skin under her eyes smudged black with mascara.

"Honey, your mother's asked me to go."

"Go? You mean not live with us?"

"Hush. You'll wake your sister up," Beverly said and blew her nose into a ragged tissue.

"Oh Beverly, it's not fair. I like you better than anybody who ever took care of us," Denise said.

"Only thing I hate is leaving you girls."

"Me and Mary Lou'll miss you. You can come back and visit."

"No, don't think she'd have that. Said I was a bad influence."

Denise's throat tightened at the thought of what she'd done that afternoon at the lake.

"I'll miss you, too, honey," Beverly said, patting Denise's arm. She stood up and gathered the shopping bags.

"Here, you keep this," she said, passing the limp copy of *True Romance* to Denise. "But listen, honey. Things ain't really like that. Them stories ain't real life."

Denise woke in the dark and found Beverly on her knees, rummaging through boxes on the closet floor, two shopping bags filled with her clothes.

Denise sat at the window and watched Beverly disappear into the shadows outside. In the sky above the fairgrounds across town, she could see some of the last of the fireworks exploding in constellations of pink, red, blue, green. With each thunderous blaze, she felt her heart pounding harder and faster. She heard Mary Lou turn over in bed.

"Is it late? Where's Beverly?"

"Gone. Mother fired her."

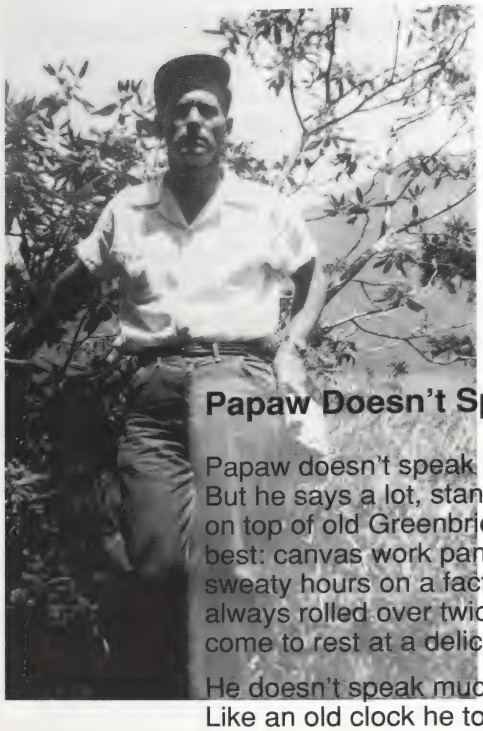
"What for? Why'd Mama do that? Who'll stay with us?" Mary Lou sobbed. "Beverly's the best hard girl ever."

Denise turned to her sister.

"It's hired girl, Mary Lou, please. H-I-R-E-D. Not H-A-R-D."

Mary Lou looked up at Denise. "Oh," she said. "Oh, Beverly." N&T

Kathy L. May is a poet and fiction writer who lives in Charlottesville, Va., where she teaches Appalachian literature through the University of Virginia's Division of Continuing Education. Her short story, "Waiting at the Paradise," appeared in Wind *as the winner of its 1997 fiction competition. Her poems have appeared in a number of journals, including* Southern Poetry Review, Mississippi Review, Poet and Critic *and* Appalachian Heritage. *Her first children's picture book,* Molasses Man, *will be published by Holiday House this fall.*



Courtesy of Wesley Blalock

Papaw Doesn't Speak Much

Papaw doesn't speak much. He never has.
But he says a lot, standing there
on top of old Greenbrier, in his American Enka
best: canvas work pants tattered by long
sweaty hours on a factory floor; button shirt, sleeves
always rolled over twice; and a dusty old cap
come to rest at a delicate crook on top of his head.

He doesn't speak much, doesn't need to.
Like an old clock he towers over a room,
over generations, with hours dividing the chimes of his voice.
But Papaw is always there, always has been.
Just watching and listening.

Papaw doesn't speak much, but his face does.
A scowl that hides in its own shadows.
A prominent, stark expression casting harsh
shades from his eyes and blocking the light from
his chapped lips. Only the soft, dark bristles
from a day-old shave give away the warmth within.

Papaw hasn't spoken much, and he probably never will.
He can't make it up old Greenbrier anymore, up to where
the far-off peaks fall short of his faded brim.
His lungs, weak from years of factory work,
can no longer climb to the sweet smell of rhododendron.
What days were once spent on top of that mountain are now
spent on a tired stool, peering through a closed window.

—Wesley Blalock

Wesley Blalock wrote this poem to honor his grandfather, Vilas Rogers. The two spent many afternoons searching for the perfect eddy and concocting great stories about the fish that got away. Blalock wrote "Papaw Doesn't Speak Much" for an Appalachian history course taught by Jim Overholt at Sevier County High School in Sevierville, Tenn. Overholt instructed the class to write a poem about a photograph after it read Jeff Daniel Marion's essay "Try to Picture It: Poetry, Photography, and the Long View" in Now & Then's *summer 1998 Appalachian Photography issue. Blalock will be attending Maryville College, Maryville, Tenn., this fall, where he plans to major in business.*

Hanging in the Balance:

The Fate of the Cherokee Language in the 21st Century

by Barbara R. Duncan
and James "Bo" Taylor

The Eastern Band of Cherokee works hard to keep one of Appalachia's first languages alive.

Siyo! (Hello!) Will the Cherokee children of the 21st century greet each other this way? Will they speak the language of their ancestors? The Cherokee language has changed, adapted, and survived for thousands of years. "It is a gift from the Creator," says the Rev. Robert Bushyhead, Cherokee elder. "And it is what makes us Cherokee."

Less than 200 years ago — before the Trail of Tears in 1838 when the federal government forcibly removed most of the Cherokee Nation to Oklahoma — nearly every Cherokee person could both read and write the Cherokee language because of the syllabary form of writing invented by Sequoyah. He was the only person in recorded human history to invent a writing system without first being literate himself, an incredible accomplishment. The Cherokee people rapidly became literate and published Bibles, hymnbooks, and a bilingual newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*. They also created a written constitution.

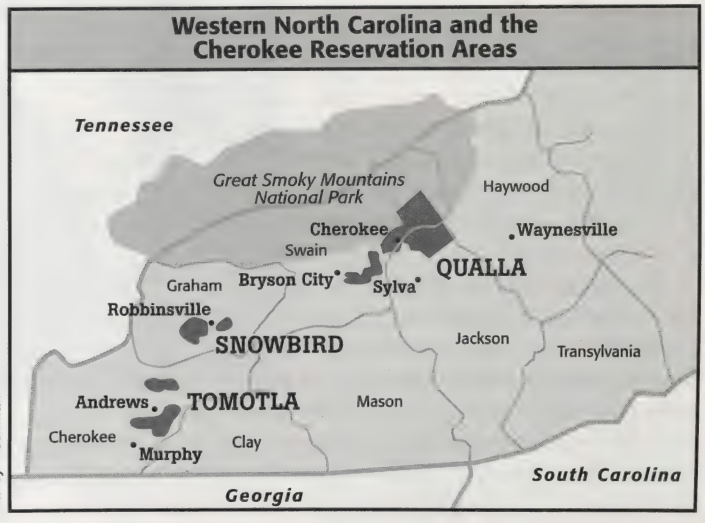
Less than 200 years ago nearly every Cherokee person could both read and write the Cherokee language because of the syllabary form of writing invented by Sequoyah.

But today fewer than 10 percent of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, living on part of their ancestral homelands in Western North Carolina, still speak and write their language. The federal government made a century-long effort to eradicate the language, along with the culture, beginning with boarding schools in 1893. Over the past 10 years, a renaissance of interest in the Cherokee language has begun, but its future is still in doubt.

The Cherokee Language

The Cherokee language is the southern branch of the Iroquoian language family, whose northern branch includes languages such as Huron, Mohawk, and Seneca, all still spoken today.

According to linguists, the Cherokee language began chang-



Museum of the Cherokee Indian

Sequoyah faced charges of witchcraft while he was developing a written form of the Cherokee language but was awarded a silver medal, which he wore for the rest of his life, for his accomplishment.

ing into a distinctive language about 3,500 years ago. This estimate is based on their observations of the rates at which changes occur in languages. If linguists are correct, then the Cherokee have had a unique culture for much longer than archaeologists and some other scholars believe. Because they define culture by sequences of material remains, archaeologists can identify a distinct Cherokee culture going back only 1,000 years. The Cherokee people, however, believe that they have always been Cherokee.

Each regular verb may have more than 21,000 forms.

Like other Native American languages, Cherokee is very different from English. (It is also, however, very different from other Native American languages as well.) Cherokee language is verb-based, and it is extremely precise and graphic. Its three word types include: verbs, nouns, and particles.

The largest number of words in the Cherokee language are verbs. Each verb must have at least one prefix followed by the verb root, with at least one suffix. Additional prefixes and suffixes give additional information. Because of the many possible ways of combining prefixes and suffixes to create specific meanings, each regular verb may have more than 21,000 forms. What follows are 10 of the 60 possible forms for the verb "see," as in "I see it," just based on changes in subject and object.

tsi go wa ti ha I see it.
o sdi go wa ti ha He/she and I see it.
o tsi go wa ti ha They and I see it.
i ni go wa ti ha You (singular) and I see it.
i di go wa ti ha You and we see it.
hi go wa ti ha You (singular) see it.
sdi go wa ti ha You (two) see it.
hi tsi go wa ti ha You (all) see it.
a go wa ti ha He/she/it sees it.
a ni go wa ti ha They see it.

In addition to the 60 forms created by changes in subject and object, there are thousands of forms created by adding prefixes and suffixes that indicate time, place, and other kinds of descriptive information. For example, one suffix tells whether the verb action was directly observed or learned through hearsay.

Gender is not specified in Cherokee pronouns—one pronoun can signify he, she, or it. There are different words, however, for man and woman, mother and father, boy and girl. Questions are formed by adding one of several possible suffixes. For instance, *a gi yo si ha* means "I am hungry," and *tsa yo si ha* means "you are hungry." To ask "Are you hungry?" the suffix *tsu* or *sk* is added so that *tsa yo si ha tsu* means "Are you hungry?" A different suffix, *ga,* makes the question reflexive: *Tsa yo si ha ga* translates roughly as "You're hungry, aren't you?" Negative statements are formed by adding a prefix. For example, as shown above, *a gi yo shi* means "I am hungry." Adding the prefix *ge sdi yi* makes it negative. *Ge sdi y-a gi yo shi* means "I am not hungry." (The i sound at the end of the prefix gets dropped, and the y combines with the a.)

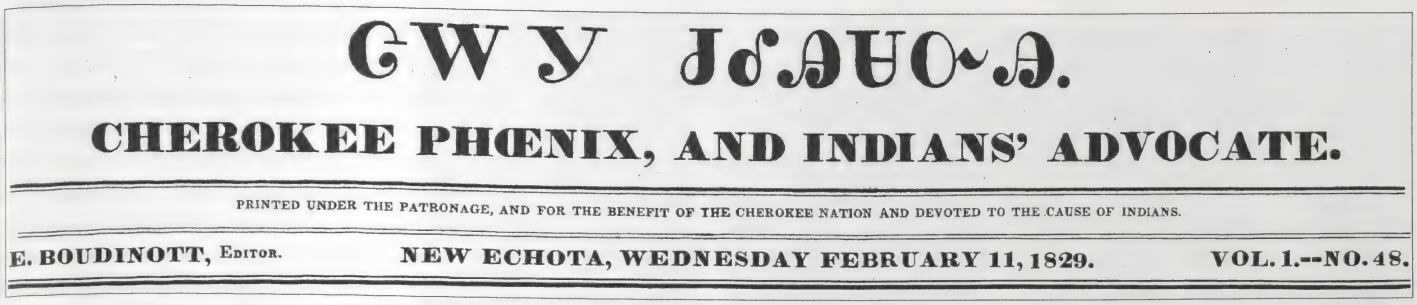
A distinct set of about 30 verbs (called classificatory verbs by linguists) require special suffixes which signal whether the verb's object is round, liquid, flexible, rigid, or animate. Some linguists believe that a more complex verb system may have existed in the past, of which only these classificatory verbs remain.

Nouns in the Cherokee language represent a person, place, or thing, much as nouns do in English language. For instance, *tsi s gwa* means bird, *ta wo di* means hawk, *a wo ha li* means eagle, *wa le la* means hummingbird, and so on. Nouns in Cherokee, however, can have prefixes and suffixes added to make different meanings. For example, the suffix *yi* means "the place of." So *tsi s gwa* means bird, and *tsi s gwa yi* means "bird place" or Birdtown.

His neighbors, believing that he was practicing witchcraft, burned Sequoyah's cabin and all his work with it. But Sequoyah began again.

Nouns from foreign languages have also influenced Cherokee nouns. For example, when the early Spanish expeditions first brought cows through the Cherokee country, the Cherokee learned to call them the Spanish word for cow. *Vaca* in Spanish became *wa ca* in the Cherokee language. Other compound words or phrases have been utilized to describe new people and things. When Scotch-Irish traders initially brought horses into

Museum of the Cherokee Indian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CHEROKEE PHŒNIX, AND INDIANS' ADVOCATE.

PRINTED UNDER THE PATRONAGE, AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHEROKEE NATION AND DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF INDIANS.

E. BOUDINOTT, EDITOR. NEW ECHOTA, WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11, 1829. VOL. 1.--NO. 48.

When the bilingual *Cherokee Phoenix* was shut down, all the syllabary typeface was destroyed. Replicas of surviving issues of the newspaper are on sale in the gift shop at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in Cherokee, N.C.

the Cherokee country about 1700, these horses always carried packs of trade goods so the Cherokee used the word *so gwi li* or "burden carrier" to mean horse.

The automobile is known by several names. *At sa* means rubber, referring to the tires. *Da gwa le lu* was the older word for wagon, which was transferred to the "horseless carriage." *Dik tu le ni* means "oval eyes," referring to the headlights' appearance. And some people just say *au to mo bi li,* giving the English word a Cherokee pronunciation.

Finally, Cherokee particles express relationships—*in, with, near, first.* These and other particles function much like English prepositions.

The sound of Cherokee has been described as melodic. In fact, meaning can be determined by the length of vowels—how long they are held and by the accent's location in a word. Pitch can also differentiate meaning. The Cherokee language can be spoken very quietly, barely moving the lips. It has no b, f, p, r, or th sounds, and the m sound is rare. It uses a glottal stop, which can change the word's meaning.

While Cherokee is a difficult language to learn to speak, it is extremely easy to learn to write for native speakers. The explanation for this seeming paradox lies in the story of the creation of the Cherokee language's written form. This written form is relatively new and is still very consistent with the language as it is spoken, unlike English, whose spellings derive from French, German, Latin, and Old English words, each with its own rules for pronunciation and spelling.

Sequoyah's Syllabary

A Cherokee man named George Guess lived in Tennessee in the early 1800s, born to a Cherokee mother and a German father, who did not stay with the family. Cherokee lore says that Sequoyah, as he came to be called, saw a paper written in English blowing in the wind and decided that if white people could have written language, Cherokee people could also.

He began by trying to create a system of pictographs—one symbol for each word—but found it unwieldy. Staying to himself, talking to himself, and writing on bark with charcoal, Sequoyah aroused the suspicion of his wife and neighbors. Although his wife left him, one of his daughters, Ayoka stayed with him. His neighbors, believing that he was practicing witchcraft, burned Sequoyah's cabin and all his work with it. But Sequoyah began again.

At some point in his efforts, he tried creating a symbol for each syllable of the language, and this was the system that he perfected. With the help of his daughter, Ayoka, he demonstrated the use of this syllabary of 85 symbols in a tribal council meeting in 1821. The tribal council was convinced of the system's validity, and within several years, nearly every Cherokee man, woman, and child was able to read and write their own language. In recognition of his great accomplishment, the Tribal Council awarded him a silver medal that he wore for the rest of his life.

Museum of the Cherokee Indian

Elias Boudinot founded the *Cherokee Phoenix,* published using the Cherokee syllabary in New Echota, Ga., for six years. The state government declared it subversive and shut it down.

This amazing development of literacy coincided with other efforts to become "civilized" as mandated by the federal government. The "civilization" policy, developed by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in 1789, called for the Cherokee men to give up hunting and become farmers, for the Cherokee women to give up farming and become spinners and weavers, and for Cherokee families to leave their villages and live on individual farmsteads, intermarrying with whites and eventually becoming part of an American culture. Some Cherokees did so.

A number of Cherokees became well-educated in English. One of these, Elias Boudinot, attended school in Connecticut and founded the bilingual Cherokee newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix,* which used a typeface of the syllabary. Published from 1828-

Museum of the Cherokee Indian

In the late 1800s, the federal government established boarding schools to culturally assimilate the Cherokee. Children attending these schools were punished for using the Cherokee language. Mary Chiltoskey's husband, Goingback Chiltoskey, is shown standing fourth from the right with the class of 1927 of the Qualla Boundary boarding school.

1834, the "subversive" *Phoenix* was shut down by the state of Georgia. During its heyday, Boudinot's press published Bibles, hymn books, and the Cherokee constitution in the syllabary. Copies of the *Phoenix* still exist today, and a reproduction of its original log building stands near Calhoun, Ga. After the Trail of Tears, Cherokee people in Oklahoma created a new bilingual newspaper, the *Cherokee Advocate.*

The Language at Risk

Following Removal, both Oklahoma Cherokees and those remaining in the east continued to speak, read, and write their language. Their spoken forms diverged into an eastern and western dialect, based, respectively, on the Middle dialect (from the Middle Towns along the Tennessee River) and the Overhill dialect (from the towns in east Tennessee). Differences became distinct and are quite noticeable today, although members of the two groups can understand each other.

By the time ethnologist James Mooney visited the Eastern Cherokee in the 1880s, he found that although everyone spoke Cherokee, fewer could still write it. Medicine people used it to record their formulas, prayers recited to effect healing. Whereas the federal government's civilization policy of 1789 led, if indirectly, to the education and literacy of the Cherokee, the federal government in the late 1800s was determined to eradicate, if not native peoples themselves, then any evidence of their culture, including their language.

Boarding schools began in 1893 on the Qualla Boundary, the Cherokee Reservation located in Western North Carolina. While some children were sent to the well-known boarding schools at Carlisle, Pa., and Chilocco, Okla., as well as to the Hampton Institute in Virginia, many Cherokee children were educated in boarding schools located only a few miles from their homes. The Qualla Boundary boarding school was operated by the federal government from 1893 to 1948. Children went to school there for nine months out of the year, removed from their families in an attempt to eliminate Cherokee culture. They returned home at Christmas and Thanksgiving and in the summer.

At the boarding school, which was run on a military model with only the English language spoken, any use of Cherokee language was physically punished. Not all students, however, were purged of their language; boys met in the furnace room to smoke cigarettes and speak Cherokee. When they were sent into the woods on the weekend to get firewood, they spoke Cherokee. More than 50 years of language suppression reduced its use among boarding school students and affected yet another generation. Students educated at the boarding schools did not teach their children to speak the Cherokee language. "We didn't want them to be punished as we were," comments Robert Bushyhead.

Smithsonian Institution, reposited at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian

As a young boy, Walker Calhoun (shown with his mother, Seliyeni, a medicine woman) learned the Cherokee syllabary. One of the few groups who utilized the syllabary after the federal government's efforts to discontinue its use were medicine people. They used it to record their healing formulas and prayers.

In 1948, the boarding school at Cherokee closed, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) took over the administration of schools in Cherokee. Their policy still followed the federal policy of eradicating any American Indian culture. However, the Snowbird Community of Cherokee people continued a strong tradition of language use throughout the 20th century, perhaps because their community was too small for a boarding school to be established. These members of the Eastern Band live on about 2,500 acres of tribal land in Graham County, about 50 miles from the town of Cherokee. In spite of the small size of their community and their location within the larger white community of this remote county on the North Carolina-Tennessee border, the Snowbird Cherokees have kept their language along with other traditions. The dialect they speak, however, is the original Overhill dialect of the Cherokee language, resembling more closely the language as now spoken in Oklahoma than the Kituwah dialect of their neighbors and relatives living on the Qualla Boundary.

As long as the BIA continued to

administer local schools, until nearly the end of the 20th century, efforts to teach Cherokee language and culture were sporadic. Some Cherokee language classes were taught in the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting a revival of interest in traditional Cherokee culture that corresponded to changes in attitudes toward cultural diversity throughout the United States.

During this time, scholars William Cook and Duane King documented the grammar of the Eastern Cherokee dialect in their dissertations in linguistics and anthropology, respectively. Local schoolteacher Mary Chiltoskey produced a pamphlet on Cherokee language with handwritten syllabary symbols.

Museum of the Cherokee Indian

In the early 1970s, teacher Mary Chiltoskey encouraged the study of the written language by producing a handwritten pamphlet using the Cherokee syllabary.

Cherokee Language Today

New technology has enabled the syllabary to continue to be reproduced. In the early 1970s, Ambassador manufactured a typewriter with 85 keys and strikers corresponding to each of Sequoyah's syllables. One of these resides today in the Museum of the Cherokee Indian archives. At about this same time, IBM created a removable typeface ball for its Selectric typewriters with all 85 of Sequoyah's symbols of Cherokee syllabary. These typewriters were used primarily in language classes among members of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, where Cherokee language classes and a bilingual center were established during this period, aided by the work of scholar Durban Feeling. Feeling had created a grammar and dictionary based on the western Cherokee dialect. Today, several digital fonts of the syllabary and language software programs have been designed for use on computers.

At the boarding school, any use of Cherokee language was physically punished. Not all students, however, were purged of their language; boys met in the furnace room to smoke cigarettes and speak Cherokee.

The current renaissance of interest in the Cherokee language is tied directly to education and to the revival of traditional culture. Beginning in 1990, the administration of schools on the Qualla Boundary was taken over by the Eastern Band from the BIA. (The BIA was providing schools as a result of treaty clauses that promised education and health care in return for land.) This local direction of education has resulted in classes in Cherokee language and culture.

Today, there are four major efforts underway to preserve and perpetuate the Cherokee language among the Eastern Band. In the Cherokee schools, Laura Hughes Pinnix oversees the teaching of language and culture. Named "Native American Teacher of the Year" in 1990, Pinnix teaches language and culture at Cherokee High School, where students must complete a Cherokee language course in order to graduate. At the elementary school, new programs now teach Cherokee language several times a week, kindergarten through sixth grade. Signs around the school use the Cherokee syllabary and English, and classroom items are labeled with the syllabary. An annual Cherokee Heritage Week in May emphasizes the importance of traditional culture. Cherokee language textbooks prepared through the Eastern Band's Cultural Resources Office have been published for third through sixth grade and have been in use since 1998.

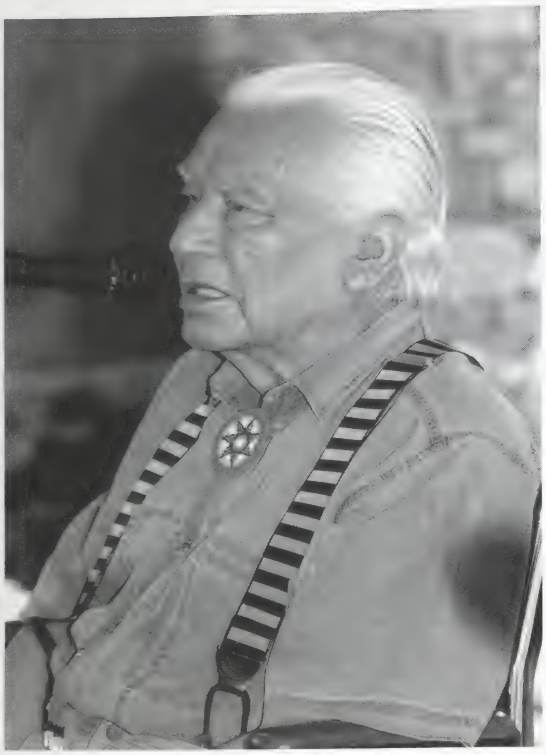
Other tribally sponsored language projects include a preschool language immersion classroom, a culturally-appropriate playground with Cherokee folktales in English and Cherokee that can be heard by pushing a button, and bilingual descriptions at "Talking Trees on the Oconoluftee Island." This walking-and-fitness trail around the island includes audio installations located next to specific trees. Information about the trees has been recorded in English and Cherokee. Funded by the Eastern Band and by the agricultural extension office, the island's new walking trails, gazebo, and picnic tables attract many visitors, including children from the elementary school across the street.

The second major effort began in 1991 when Jean Bushyhead, an elementary school teacher, began working with her father, tribal elder Robert Bushyhead, to document the Kituwah dialect, the one used on the Qualla Boundary. Robert Bushyhead speaks a formal, rather than informal, version of the Eastern dialect. They work daily to record on tape, videotape, and in computer programs Robert Bushyhead's carefully dictated lesson plans and language materials. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians now support their work, and Jean's brother Eddie, a musician, is also assisting with the project. They have created language lesson videotapes, an audio dictionary on

At the elementary school, new programs now teach Cherokee language several times a week. Signs around the school use the Cherokee syllabary and English, and classroom items are labeled with the syllabary.

computer, and printed materials for use in the schools.

Walker Calhoun, another respected elder, is responsible for the third major preservation effort. He has been informally teaching the Cherokee language to a group that meets once a week at his house. For several years, they have been studying Cherokee language and practicing conversation. This language education is integrated with Calhoun's practice of the sacred ceremonial stomp dances. Cherokee speakers from Big Cove, like Calhoun, speak with some slight differences from speakers in other communities on the Qualla Boundary. When Mooney learned the Cherokee language in the 1880s and recorded medicine formulas, he worked primarily with people from the Big Cove community, and many of their descendants live there today.



Mike Kesselring, reposited at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian

Tribal elder Robert Bushyhead is working with his daughter, Jean, and son, Eddie, to document the Cherokee's Kituwah dialect by recording language lesson videotapes and producing materials to use in the schools.

Online Lessons

The Museum of the Cherokee Indian, a nonprofit organization located on the Qualla Boundary, functions as the tribal museum. Language documentation and online lessons are part of its new education department. The museum archive, a major research center for Cherokee history and culture, contains Cherokee language materials, including some interviews from the Snowbird community, as well as various documents written in the syllabary from the 1830s to the present. The archive continues to add historic and contemporary language materials to its collection.

The museum's new education department, directed by Barbara Duncan and funded in part by a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, offers courses for public school teachers on Cherokee culture and history in an effort to improve teaching about Native Americans. The education department also documents Cherokee culture, sponsors arts and crafts workshops, produces an annual festival, and will offer Cherokee language classes for adults in the community. Museum archivist James "Bo" Taylor has just begun a series of Cherokee language lessons online, free of charge and open to the general public, through the museum's web site at cherokeemuseum.org. All of these efforts at the museum constitute the fourth major initiative aimed at perpetuating the Cherokee language.

The most fluent speakers of the language are the oldest tribal members, who will not be here forever to keep the language alive.

Most Cherokee children now come to school speaking English; the most fluent speakers of the language are the oldest tribal members, who will not be here forever to keep the language alive. But there are more and more exceptions to this dichotomy: adults in their 30s and 40s, like Marie Junaluska, who are fluent speakers and are working on cultural preservation; adults who are teaching the language in the schools; and adults who are making an effort to learn the language even though they have never spoken it. The future of the language hangs in the balance.

Sge. (Thank you; it is ended.) N&T

Barbara R. Duncan holds a doctorate in folklore and folklife and studied ethnolinguistics with Dell Hymes at the University of Pennsylvania. She works as education director and fundraiser at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. Her most recent book is the 1998 Living Stories of the Cherokee, *featuring the stories of five members of the Eastern Band, including a translation into Cherokee language and syllabary by Marie Junaluska.*

James "Bo" Taylor is a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and holds a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology from Western Carolina University with a minor in Cherokee Studies. He works as archivist for the Museum of the Cherokee Indian and also is a champion powwow dancer. He studies Cherokee language, music, and dance with Walker Calhoun.

Kain-tuck

We lay open the northernmost vein
in the blood boundary of the Cherokee.
Brace against the curse that we bury
sons in the only place they will never
hear their mothers weep. Patrol single file
in shoulder-high ferns down gorges that the sun
never strikes. Swing half-shaven heads ridge-right,
then stoop-left. Light no fires. Slit throats of trout
threaded on grapevine stringer. Stack crow-picked
fishskulls on sandstone boulder above flood line.
Drop pinched-off tails of firefly watchmen
into eye sockets: mist-hung lanterns
warning all invaders who dare wade south,
silently slipping one by one in black
and chin-tipping waters of the ford,
equally sure this is their Shawnee land,
arms hooked over antler moon, ferrying bows.

—Ken Goosens

A Cherokee Indian, Ken Goosens currently lives and works for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. He has had poems published in several magazines, including Visions, Poet Lore, Riverwind, International Quarterly, Potato Eyes, Black Buzzard Review, Appalachia, American Indian Culture and Research Journal, *and* Antietam Review.

A Clear Connection

by Anya E. Liftig

A young woman tries to bridge the communication gap between Lost Creek, Ky., and Manhattan.

The day began as usual—dodging piles of rotting trash, stepping around puddles of unknown substances and weaving in and out of teeming masses of strangers on Third Avenue. I pulled my digital cell phone, the newest "must-have" New York accessory, out of my bag. As I dialed the number, I imagined myself being magically transported from the chaos of the city, along the invisible wires, through satellites and switches and deep into the Appalachian mountains to arrive by my Mamaw's side when she picked up the phone and said, "Hello." Despite the fact that I still found myself immersed in the grit of the city, the connection was complete. I was with her on the porch of the old family home at the head of the holler, fresh from digging potatoes and killing a few chiggers. The dog scratched at a midsummer flea, and one cousin or another was working on the old truck.

Physically, Lost Creek, Ky., and Manhattan are relatively close. Philosophically, they are worlds apart. In many ways, my life has been spent trying to traverse that long philosophical distance over and over again. This journey began even before I was born.

Anya E. Liftig

Anya Liftig: Self Portrait, 1998

In the mid-1960s, my mother, akin to nearly the entire population of Breathitt County, Ky., made the bold but nonetheless difficult decision to leave her family in the mountains and head north to attend college. By combining student loans, my grandfather's pension from the Army, work-study jobs, and, most importantly, a fierce determination to experience the world, my mother graduated from college in just under three years, also earning the distinction of being the only woman ever at her school to major in geology. She was the first college graduate in the family, and I am the second. But with the exception of our summer trips "back home," my mother has never lived in Kentucky again. Life, with its bizarre twists and turns, has led her down a different path.

That path began in part with her desire to see the world, which led to her enrollment in the Peace Corps to teach children in Upper Volta, West Africa. At her first training session in Philadelphia, she met my father — a doctor's son who was then every inch the Northeastern hippie of 1969: long hair, psychedelic values, and a torn draft ticket. He had just returned from trying to levitate the Pentagon, along with the main chant leader and poet Allen Ginsberg, linguist Noam Chomsky, and a million other hippies that summer in Washington, D.C. (Needless to say, despite their best efforts, the Pentagon failed to rise.) I can only imagine the hell that must have broken loose when my mother arrived back home in Kentucky in her red VW bug one summer and announced that the Yankee (a Jewish Yankee to boot) by her side was her husband.

My mom's near encyclopedic knowledge of plants and animals endeared her to my Jewish grandparents, and my father stunned my Kentucky family with his uncanny luck at fishing and his love of bluegrass music.

In the years that followed, each side of the family grew more and more accustomed to one another. My mom's near encyclopedic knowledge of plants and animals endeared her to my Jewish grandparents, and my father stunned my Kentucky family with his uncanny luck at fishing and his love of bluegrass music.

Anya E. Liftig

Mamaw.

Anya E. Liftig

Cousin Julie at sunset.

I made my debut into this strange brew on September 18, 1977. Immediately, my parents endeavored to give equal billing to both of their respective cultures. I spent my school year in Westport, Conn., among the New York suburbanites and my summers up the holler in Kentucky. My parents took me to both church and synagogue, and consequently, we still celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah, Passover and Easter. My mother imparted her wisdom on how to use the gap between my teeth to spit really far, and my father told me stories of how Great-Great-Great-Uncle Isaac arrived at Ellis Island with not a penny in hand. Of course when I began to study the Civil War in history class, my mother made sure I gave the rebels a fair reading. My father retorted with the words, "Border State," and I think he ended up eating alone that night.

But for all the love, understanding, and humor that went into my parents' effort to raise me in both of their cultures, I was pretty confused sometimes. For one thing, my Kentucky cousins thought I "talked weird, like people on the TV." Of course, the fact that I called all carbonated beverages "soda" did not pass unnoticed.

As we all hit puberty, the differences between my Kentucky family (specifically, my cousins) and myself became more prominent. I retreated into a world of ballet classes and schoolbooks, while they attended football games and tried out for the cheerleading squad. At home in Connecticut, I suddenly found myself slightly embarrassed when a schoolmate announced her family's plans to summer on the Riviera. Suddenly, Kentucky didn't seem all that exotic. In high school, jokes about Colonel Sanders and his Kentucky Fried Chicken were fair game, as were comments about poor white trash, trailer living, and pregnant and barefoot teenagers.

I tried to ignore it all. After all, some of my classmates thought that when people referred to "the West," they meant Pennsylvania. But it still hurt, if only because I did have cousins who were already pregnant at an age when I had barely put on a training

My Kentucky cousins thought I "talked weird, like people on the TV." Of course, the fact that I called all carbonated beverages "soda" did not pass unnoticed.

Anya E. Liftig

Thelma looks at the baby.

Anya E. Liftig

The porch.

bra. Everything in my life was focused on getting into a good college and having an equally good career, and many of my Kentucky cousins' lives seemed focused on getting married and leaving high school any way they could.

It was one evening the summer before my freshman year in college that I would no longer be able to turn a blind eye to these differences. I had just finished shelling peas for dinner and went to take a break on the porch. As usual, it was crowded with kinfolk of every kind, all carrying on conversations among themselves. I was headed to Yale in the fall, and my father couldn't have been prouder. He constantly referred to me as "my Yalie" and spoke of the privileges of Ivy Leaguedom. But that bragging seemed grossly inappropriate among my cousins. We rarely spoke about the details of our lives and kept the content of our talks to the same things that had occupied us in childhood — the size of this bug, the flavor of that ice cream, the adorable kitten, and so forth.

All of the sudden, the porch went silent, save for my father's Northeastern lilt. Much to my horror, I heard him discussing the price of a year at Yale (no less than $30,000 at that point). Everyone on the

All of the sudden, the porch went silent, save for my father's Northeastern lilt.

porch stared at me. That amount of money was unheard of, especially to be spent on school.

I was mortified. All of the sudden, I wasn't just Anya, but I was Anya, the rich cousin from New York City. I had never felt so much an outsider in my own family. Of course, the Jewish side of my family was all for climbing the ladder of social strata. But in Kentucky, it was seen as a betrayal — a sense of you-are-no-longer-one-of-us. It was then that I began to understand how my mother's quest for education and adventure had put her in direct conflict with the intimacy and insularity of her kin.

But kinfolk is still kinfolk, fancy Yale diploma or not. In the four years since that incident on the porch, I have tried, sometimes too hard, to bridge those philosophical gaps. Yet, in rare moments, like this morning on the street, the connection is clear and free of the combined weight of all of our lives. I just wish it happened more often. N&T

Anya E. Liftig recently graduated from Yale University and currently has no idea what to do with the rest of her life.

Anya E. Liftig

Dana and the boys.

Anya E. Liftig

Old Route 22.

Two-Ton Treadway's Reign of Terror

by Virginia L. McCurry

With her Southern drawl and ample girth, Mrs. Treadway is an endless source of entertainment for her class of seventh graders in the North Carolina mountains.

On the first day of junior high in my hometown in the mountains of Western North Carolina, I made sure I got to school early. I was hoping to score a good seat. I not only managed to get the prime seat next to the windows, but I surrounded myself with friends. Margo was behind me, Mary Ellen in front, Kate and Shawna to my right, all forming a perfect buffer zone between me and the potential dangers of the seventh grade.

We waited anxiously while the room filled up. No one knew anything about our new teacher.

"I just hope we get a young one for a change," I said, "a young one who has a sense of humor."

"Anything's better than the hag parade we just sat through for the last six years," Margo said.

I turned around to answer and saw Margo's eyes go wide and her jaw drop. I whirled back around. There, literally filling the doorway, was an enormous woman gazing upon us all with a mournful, bovine expression. She had on a faded pastel dress, at least ten years out of style, with a billowing tent of a skirt, button-up front, and a cloth belt squeezing her in the middle. On her feet were scuffed-up green suede Hushpuppies, and between the shoes and the dress were two huge, bare legs, splayed out across the doorway to support her considerable weight. Her hair sprang out from her head in wild disarray, clumping and curling at random around her wide blotchy face, and her mouth was slack and quivery and the color of raw liver.

"Cla-a-ass," she drawled, "let's git qui-i-iet no-o-ow."

That was a totally unnecessary directive, as we were all struck dumb at the sight of her. She galumphed over to her desk, behind which was no ordinary wooden teacher's chair, but a spacious, cushioned armchair. Grasping a helpless piece of chalk in her fist, she wrote, screeching across the blackboard, "Mrs. Treadway," then, this exhausting task complete, collapsed into the chair with a whoosh and a sigh.

"She stole that chair from the library," Mary Ellen whispered.

Mrs. Treadway began to call the roll — a slow, painful process.

"Clay-rah Burke," she brayed.

"That's *Claire,*" Claire said, blushing while the class hooted.

There, literally filling the doorway, was an enormous woman gazing upon us all with a mournful, bovine expression.

"Clay-rah …? Is Clay-rah here? Cla-a-a-ass, let's git qui-i-iet, so's I kin call the roll. Is Clayrah here?"

"My name is CLAIRE!"

"All rahght, Clayrah, I see you now."

"Godfrey Martin" was her next victim.

"It's *Geoffrey,*" he said.

"Says here, Godfrey, in my rollbook. Don't be a-tryin' to fool me now."

"It's just like Jeffrey with a J, but it's spelled with a G," Geoffrey pleaded.

"All rahght, Godfrey," she said. Geoffrey plunked his head down on his desk in despair.

One of the few names she got right was Tyrone Patterson. I figured that must be because she had heard of him. Everyone knew Tyrone. He was the funniest boy in my grade. He always sat in the front so that everyone could see him. Teachers despaired of him but couldn't stay mad at him, and his classmates watched him to see what he would do next.

The next name on the list was Rex Scott. "That's a dog's name," Shawna muttered, and we all giggled. But Tyrone had one better than that. He turned around from his front row seat and, with a wicked grin, announced in a loud whisper, "If she said his name backwards, it would be Sex Rot." We all howled while Mrs. Treadway begged for quiet. By the time she got to the end of the list, we had all become resigned to our fates and gave up correcting her.

Then it was time for the reading of the lunch menu, an event we were to be treated to daily.

"To-da-ay, we will be having tay-ay-ter tots, grayne pays, and uh… uh… lagga-zini," Mrs. Treadway read.

We sat in puzzled silence for a moment. Then Mary Ellen raised her hand. "Mrs. Treadway, don't you mean *lasagna*?"

"Wa-ell honey lamb, I cain't pernounce these French foods."

Next we were introduced to morning subjects. All the textbooks looked ancient and frightfully boring. Spelling was taught from a ragged book with a faded blue cover with lists of insultingly easy words. The English book spent a good chunk of its pages aiming at teaching us poor, ungrateful wretches the correct way to compose a proper thank you note. It was full of such sage advice as: "When writing to thank your neighbors for taking you to the circus, try not to mention that you got mustard on your new sweater." There was the North Carolina history book, so old that it actually contained a drawing of a black woman dressed in Aunt-Jemima-style garb, with a caption reading: "Even the Negro slaves looked down on the 'po' white trash.' " The text focused mostly on the Civil War era, which the authors apparently did not consider to be over yet.

It did not take long to realize that this school year was not going to be filled with academic challenges. I read *Gone With the Wind* in its entirety during history time, which consisted of Mrs. Treadway's agonizingly slow reading aloud of the textbook. She never looked up or left her desk. We could get away with just about anything as long as we were quiet. Shawna and Kate had magic marker fights, which they called "poxing" because of the multicolored freckles it left on their arms. Mary Ellen and Lisa wrote and circulated cartoons and notes. I propped my history book on my desk, hid the novel behind it, and read happily at the same one-sided story the history book told, only in a much more entertaining fashion.

We discovered that all the history tests required of us was to match definitions to a list of lettered words. The answers always spelled out something, such as "H-A-P-P-Y H-A-L-L-O-W-E-E-N." The first one to crack the code sent the message down the rows, causing us all to finish in record time, while Mrs. Treadway patted herself on the back for the excellent teaching that resulted in so many perfect scores.

Spelling tests were every Friday. Mrs. Treadway lumbered up and down the aisles, her gait matching her long drawn-out mispronunciations of the spelling words.

"Ayulf-ayulf-uh-uh," she moaned for *alfalfa,* her maroon polyester zip-up dress brushing the desks on both sides of the aisle.

"Gro-shur-ee-eeez-zz," meaning *groceries,* as she paused to rest, propped against the window ledge right next to my desk.

"Cris-chuls" for *crystals,* and all over the room came the

Nancy Jane Earnest

clonking sound of heads hitting the desktops in an effort to muffle the snorts of laughter.

Tarantula, pronounced by her as "Tar-an-too-la," was our favorite.

"Cun-sidder-uh-bu-uh-ul," and off she tromped again, always making a visit to the coat closets at the back of the room. These closets were her pet peeve because they had cheap metal folding doors that constantly hopped off their tracks. She could not stand to see them that way. She would stop suddenly, grab the handles, and kick the doors into submission. The view of this from our desks was spectacular, so as soon as she stopped wrestling with the doors and continued toward the front of the room, Shawna would hop up, dash to the closets, yank them off the tracks, and zip back to her desk, all before Mrs. Treadway reached the front and turned around. If we were lucky, the spelling list would be long enough to make her work her way back around and treat us to a repeat performance.

The test could be drawn out even longer if someone pretended not to understand one of the words and raised a hand to ask her to repeat it. Then she would make a sentence with the word.

"Pra-a-tee-ee. Clay-ay-rah is wearing pra-tee pank shoes toda-ay-ay."

"My name is *Claire,*" Claire said, shoving her pretty pink shoes under her desk.

"Ah know that, honey-lamb," Mrs. Treadway replied and moved on by.

She would never ever admit to being wrong about anything. Mary Ellen began running to the back of the room for a dictionary when we were given a definition we suspected was incorrect. If she took the book to the front to prove a point, the reply was always the same: "There kin be more than one meanin' to enny given word."

Once we had to fill out a schoolwide survey, asking our opinions about various aspects of school life, to be answered by checking boxes marked "excellent, good, fair, poor, or not applicable."

"Mrs. Treadway, what does 'not applicable' mean?" someone asked.

"It means worse than poor," she declared.

So, for the question, "How do you rate the food in the cafeteria?" everyone in the class answered "not applicable," except those of us who sat close to Mary Ellen and her dictionary. We just put "poor."

We all became masters at that great junior high game called Getting the Teacher Off the Subject. The best method was to ask Mrs. Treadway about her husband Bill, or as she called him, "Bee-ull." I was the only one in the class who actually got to meet the faultless Bill. My father was the veterinarian in our rural county, and late in the fall, he held rabies vaccinations clinics in parking lots of local schools and churches. I used to go along to write out the receipts and hand out tags. One afternoon at a remote hamlet, a rusty pickup truck roared into the dusty parking lot. Its bed was filled with a baying pack of scrawny hunting hounds. From the driver's side slid a rail-thin man dressed in faded, oil-stained overalls, unlaced brogans, battered straw hat, and a week's growth of greasy chin whiskers.

Then I saw her easing slowly out of the passenger side. It was … Mrs. Treadway. And she was wearing blue jeans. And Keds sneakers. And a sleeveless blouse.

I was rigid with shock. I had never considered the possibility of any teacher having a life outside of school. My dad greeted them and hopped up into the back of their truck to inoculate the yapping mass of canines as Mrs. Treadway looked on. Bill ambled over to my folding table and spat out a wad of something unspeakable at my feet.

"Bee-ull Treadway, Route 2, King's Creek. We's getting eight dawgs they shots," he muttered, pulling a rubber-banded roll of dollar bills out of his pocket and peeling off three tens and two ones.

Spelling tests were every Friday. Mrs. Treadway lumbered up and down the aisles, her gait matching her long drawn-out mispronunciations of the spelling words.

I shakily wrote out the receipt and handed it to him along with eight tags, then slumped back in my chair and watched them drive away. If she had noticed me sitting there, she never showed it. I couldn't wait to report back to my friends.

As winter set in, shiny knee-high zip-up boots became the fashion rage. Lisa and I did not succumb to the fad, but most of the girls in the class did. We teased the others for wearing "sexy boots," as they were called at our school. Shawna not only had the boots but a shiny brown coat to match. One morning before class began, as she was showing them off for us, she got that familiar gleam in her eye.

"I'm going to tell Mrs. Treadway she should get herself some boots like these," she said, pointing to her toe and admiring her own vinyl-clad leg.

"You wouldn't dare," said Mary Ellen — and that was all it took. Shawna took off like a bullet to the front of the room. She stuck her leg out beside the teacher's chair.

"Mrs. Treadway," she said, "do you like my new boots?"

"Thur ni-ice, honey-lamb, vury ni-ice."

"Mrs. Treadway, why don't you get you some sexy boots?" Shawna asked, her eyes wide with innocence. We all waited, breathless, for the reply, sure that Shawna was headed for the office.

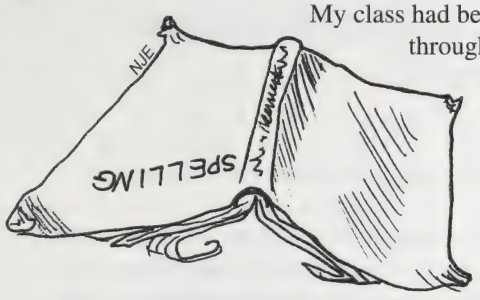
"Ah would, but Ah'm afeared they'd swell mah laig," she said.

We all got real busy all of a sudden, getting books out of our desks or hanging up coats, whatever we could do to muffle our guffaws.

Most of us tried to be sneaky about making fun of Mrs. Treadway. Tyrone was the most popular kid in class that year be-

cause he was the only one who could make smart remarks right to her face, cracking the rest of us up, and yet not make her mad. She had a soft spot for him. We figured it was because his mother had recently died, or maybe it was because just looking at Tyrone's wide grin made people smile back at him. For whatever reason, Mrs. Treadway threw him a surprise birthday party in the spring, complete with balloons, games, and a cake. Everyone had a marvelous time, and no one questioned the logic of giving Tyrone a party.

Later in the spring something happened at the high school. About fifty black students staged a walkout to protest unfair treatment by some of the teachers. They marched through town and down to the junior high where they circled around a few times and then went home. No one was hurt, but school was called off for a week, and the town began to refer to the incident as "The Riot." School officials asked some of those students to serve on a high school committee to visit each class at the junior high to discuss racial relations.



My class had been the first to come through school as an integrated class since the first grade, and I thought we had adjusted pretty well. Things were OK, I told myself. I couldn't figure out why it had to be such a big deal. I didn't want to think about it or talk about it. Everyone else must have felt the same way because no one had much to say when the committee came to our class.

After a while, one of the high school boys turned to Mrs. Treadway and said, "I heard you gave Tyrone a birthday party."

"Why ye-as, I de-id," she said, grinning broadly as if they were about to present her with the Good Citizen Award.

But they all frowned and turned on her. "Why did you do that?" a girl asked. I recognized her as Angela, one of the high school cheerleaders.

Mrs. Treadway's eyes and mouth popped open in surprise. "Becawse he didn't have nobody to do for him," she said.

"And do you give every student in here a birthday party?"

"Naw, of course not," Mrs. Treadway replied, her voice shaky.

"Then why give Tyrone one?"

"Becawse he lost his Mama ..." she began to explain.

"And you found it necessary to broadcast that fact to the class and embarrass him in front of everyone just because he is black?" Angela said.

"Naw, naw, that's not rahght ... " Mrs. Treadway began again, but to no avail because Angela began lecturing her about singling Tyrone out. We sat staring, wondering if by eating that birthday cake, we had participated in a racist act.

Eventually the committee left, and in a strangled voice, Mrs. Treadway directed us to "git aout yore history books and ainswer the questions on payge 174."

We obeyed and worked quietly, stealing glances at her now and then. She sat at her desk, staring into space while silent tears coursed down her broad face unchecked, plopping onto her dress where the wet stain grew until her whole front was soaking wet. Then the final bell rang. We put away our books and filed out past her while she still sat and stared.

After that, Shawna left the closet doors alone. We didn't have the heart to make fun of Mrs. Treadway anyway—at least not much, though we did still call her Two-Ton once in awhile. N&T

Virginia L. McCurry works as a feature writer for the Forsyth Herald *in Cumming, Ga. She recently completed a master's degree in creative writing at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Ga. She has had nonfiction stories published in* Appalachian Heritage, Lefthander, *and* The Atlantan.

Longing for a Kentucky Voice

Felix in his Ford
is cruising his territory.
He sees the Sizemores on their porch
below the road. He stops
sails forth that greeting which once
carried from ridge to ridge,
his sweet vowels a celebration
of those he calls, "Brother Johnson
he-ey Brother Johnson."
Those on the porch look up, squint,
"Yea-ah." The men climb up the bank
with their right hands out.

In my country I drive fast eyes ahead.
At the light I catch sight
of an acquaintance on the road
yell hi. Her pitched voice twists
into a missile, cuts straight over
and fries me. It's an ordinary greeting.
No howdy brother here.

—Noel Smith

Noel Smith was born and raised in New York City and became a social worker with the Frontier Nursing Service in Leslie County, Ky. Upon returning to New York, she taught elementary school. She now lives with her husband in the lower Hudson Valley, and she visits with her Leslie County adoptive family as often as possible.

Smoky Mountain Voices: A Lexicon of Southern Appalachian Speech

edited by
Harold F. Farwell Jr. and J. Karl Nicholas

University Press of Kentucky
Lexington, Ky. - 1993
$19.00 (hardcover)

"Laws-a-mighty me!" Have you ever been "bodaciously ruint" or had a tooth "jumped"? If you want to learn some of the fascinating words and expressions of Southern Appalachia or look up the meaning and usage of a term you don't know, this is the book for you.

Harold F. Farwell Jr. and J. Karl Nicholas have put together a valuable and entertaining package that preserves and makes accessible the Southern Appalachian words, expressions, and quotations collected by Horace Kephart during the early decades of the 20th century. Kephart, author of the 1913 classic *Our Southern Highlanders,* came to live on Hazel Creek, near Bryson City, N.C., as an adult and spent the rest of his life collecting mountain speech. "I have myself taken down from the lips of Carolina mountaineers some eight hundred dialectal or obsolete words," he asserted. The major collection of Kephart materials — including his correspondence, papers, and journals — is housed in the Hunter Library Archives at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C., where both Farwell and Nicholas are professors of English.

In their introduction, the editors tell us that their purpose is "to bring to light a unique collection of data on the speech of the Southern Appalachians. It focuses on the special words used by the people who lived in or near the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina in the years immediately before the National Park was formed." (Kephart, incidentally, was instrumental in the establishment of the park.) The editors also provide a biographical sketch with information about Kephart's collecting habits.

The "Lexicon of Southern Appalachian Speech" — or "word list" — makes up the bulk of the book. Presented in alphabetical order, entries consist of the word, its part of speech, and a definition, plus several illustrative quotations taken from Kephart's records. The editors have keyed the entries to a list of sources and provided parenthetical references in the text. The sources include not only Kephart's most famous work, *Our Southern Highlanders,* but also his article "A Word List from the Mountains of Western North Carolina," published in *Dialect Notes* in 1917; selected correspondence; his logging and hunting lists; and his 27 ledger-sized journals. In a concluding bibliographic note, the editors also supply a list of standard reference works they used to prepare definitions for words listed but not defined in Kephart's journals.

This book is a delight. It belongs in all Appalachian Studies collections and is invaluable to any serious student of Appalachian language and dialect. It is just plain fun for the browser who likes words or is interested in Appalachian speech and expressions.

— Linda Behrend

Linda Behrend, born and raised in upper East Tennessee, is a librarian at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tenn. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in English and a master's degree in library science, both from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and has long been interested in the language and literature of the Southern Appalachian mountain region.

Orville Hicks: Mule Egg Seller & Appalachian Storyteller

Produced by Orville Hicks and Thomas McGowan

Orville Hicks
Boone, N.C. – 1998
$13.00 (cassette) $20.00 (CD)

The photograph on the front of this engaging recording of tales shows Orville Hicks standing between a white mule and

Along the Widow's Fence

She never believed Hugh would return,
but if he could, he'd ramble through
the night, wind her clock backward
or open windows during a storm.
But not like this, arriving
as five blue jays perched on her stone fence
ignoring the sprinkled seed before them
the first day icicles began to thin
from the eaves. Their black thorn beaks
point at her kitchen window
as she wipes crumbs from the toaster
and mumbles about the little things
he liked to hear: who won at Rook,
who didn't send a Christmas card,
who brought that dry turkey…
Listening the way he always did,
without response, looking off to the side
or down at his feet—
what she needs to feel normal again.

— Charlotte Pence

Charlotte Pence teaches English at Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn. She is a native of West Virginia. Pence has a master of fine arts degree from Emerson College and her work has appeared in Southern Poetry Review, Seattle Review, Cold Mountain Review, *and other magazines.*

Reviews

Thomas McGowan

Storyteller Orville Hicks performs during the summer of 1998 in Boone, N.C.

a wagon of ripe pumpkins. Dressed in his blue bib overalls, with a broad grin on his bearded face, Hicks seems to beckon the viewers to buy some of his "mule eggs."

Like all good storytellers, Hicks makes this classic Southern tale his own. He recalls that when he was 12 years old, his father left him to sell pumpkins at the barn. "A pretty rich fellow" in a "great big old Cadillac" stops and asks, "Son, what are them things?" At that moment, Hicks knew "I had me a sucker right then." After Hicks convinces the man that the pumpkins are mule eggs that will hatch tiny mules in two weeks if the man and his wife keep them warm, the man buys the largest one for $10. When he returns in two weeks, mad because "that mule egg you sold me wadn't no good," Hicks convinces him that he must have gotten a bad one and sells him one more for half price. When the man accidentally drops the new pumpkin on the way back to the car and it rolls into a briar patch, a "big old jack rabbit" jumps out. Thinking it is a baby mule, the man chases it for an hour before he gives out. "And he said, 'Son, you can keep them mule eggs,'" reports Hicks. "'Them little devils is that fast, he got grown,' he said 'I wouldn't be able to plow with it anyway.'"

Orville Hicks is the newest storyteller in the famous Hicks-Harmon Beech Mountain line of storytellers from western Watauga County, N.C. He is the great-grandson of Council Harmon, whose tales were gathered by folklore collector Richard Chase. Orville Hicks learned his tales from his mother, Sarah Ann Harmon Hicks, from her brother, Adie Harmon, and from his cousin, Ray Hicks. Ray Hicks is a National Heritage Fellow and well-known storyteller at the Jonesborough, Tenn., National Storytelling Festival. Orville Hicks works as the supervisor of the U.S. Route 321-Aho Road Recycling Site between Boone and Blowing Rock, N.C., where he often entertains the public. He also performs at schools, banquets, and festivals. The 20 selections comprising this recording provide an entertaining and educational introduction to Southern Appalachian oral traditions.

The first section of the recording is one of Orville's typical tale-telling sessions, a mixture of one of the cycle of folktales about the trickster Jack ("Jack and the Varmints"), personal narratives, jokes, tall tales, and anecdotes. As he does with his signature story, "Mule Eggs," Hicks recasts traditional narratives into personal experiences. A lively teller, Hicks holds the audience's attention with his expressive voice, native dialect, sound effects, sense of timing, and infectious laugh. Those who have had the pleasure of seeing Orville Hicks perform will appreciate the recording's rich sound quality that accurately conveys the feel of a live performance.

The second part of the recording contains another long Jack tale, "Jack and the Heifer Hide," as well as other tales, jokes, and anecdotes. He retells some of the stories of "Lie-Hew" Yonce (John Calvin Yonce), an itinerant farmhand in Watauga County who used to entertain the families he stayed with by telling stories, singing, and whittling.

Folklorist Thomas McGowan of Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., provides a highly informative and well-written commentary on Hicks and his storytelling tradition. In the 17 pages of liner notes, he introduces the reader to Jack tales and the influences on Orville of the Hicks-Harmon storytelling line. McGowan analyzes Hicks' storytelling style and narrative persona and provides a commentary on each of the selections, as well as an excellent bibliography. The only thing missing from these liner notes are the birth dates of Orville and the other Hicks-Harmon storytellers to which McGowan refers. Such dates would help the audience locate these traditional tales and tellers in time. Nevertheless, this recording provides a valuable resource for teachers and students of Appalachian culture, folklore, oral tradition, and storytelling. Transcriptions, teacher's guides, and other information are available from McGowan. Hick's engaging personality, coupled with a wide variety of tales, captures the best of a skilled storyteller's art.

—Elizabeth C. Fine

Elizabeth C. Fine is a folklorist and the director of the humanities program of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

Jane Hicks Gentry: A Singer Among Singers

by Betty N. Smith

University Press of Kentucky
Lexington, Ky. – 1998
$25.00 (paper)

Jane Hicks Gentry occupied a notable role in the transmission, performance, and collecting of the verbal and musical folklore of the Southern Appalachians. A talented and prolific bearer of the tradi-

tions of the Hicks-Harmon families of Watauga County, N.C., she was the granddaughter of Council Harmon, noted source of the Beech Mountain Jack tales, the cycle of stories which revolve around the adventures of the trickster Jack. She contributed significantly to early 20th century British collector Cecil Sharp's song-catching. Her singing, tale-telling, weaving, cooking, riddle-making, and forceful personality contributed to the raising of a large family in Hot Springs, N.C., the educational and promotional programs of the Dorland-Bell Institute there, and the representation of Appalachian identity by a noted Northern journalist, Irving Bacheller.

In *Jane Hicks Gentry: A Singer Among Singers,* Betty Smith combines numerous elements to present a rich, sensitive portrait of this legendary person. There is critical biography, republication of tale texts, and new transcriptions of songs as well as a helpful collection of the songs, stories, and verbal lore that endeared Gentry to family, Dorland-Bell students, and visitors to Sunnybank, the boarding house she ran in Hot Springs. Smith organizes her 100-page critical biography into 12 chapters, the first half of which chronicles Gentry's life story and her connections with Hicks family history and the local history of Hot Springs. Hot Springs was a mountain resort town and the site of Dorland-Bell, an important educational institution that began as a settlement school.

In representing Gentry's life, Smith weaves a story from many sources. The Hicks and Harmon families of Watauga have maintained extensive oral historical and genealogical traditions now collected in two voluminous printed genealogies. These published genealogies not only list basic facts from records but also include narratives from oral history and from the scholarly and popular writing about the families. Smith's biography artfully ties together these genealogical materials with oral history from Gentry family members and Dorland-Bell students and family letters and papers. She also draws on regional and local history publications, folklore scholarship, and popular writing—most notably Bacheller's publications and unpublished manuscripts—to create an admiring and loving portrait of Jane Gentry, a woman who inspired considerable admiration and love during her lifetime.

Smith carefully documents her sources with footnotes and full bibliographic references. In addition to her wide research, Smith's strong sense of place, singer's perspective, and sincere rapport with informants enrich her sympathetic presentation of the life of Gentry and her family.

The second half of the critical biography includes chapters on the genres of Gentry's extensive repertory: Jack tales, ballads, folksongs, riddles, and folk rhymes. The book also reprints 15 of the 23 narratives collected by Isabel Gordon Carter and published in a 1925 issue of the *Journal of American Folklore.* These texts provide a helpful reminder of the richly developed narratives in oral circulation among Hicks-Harmon relatives before folklore collector Richard Chase's reputed rewritings.

Also included are tunes and lyrics of 70 ballads and songs transcribed by musicologist John Forbes from the Harvard University Houghton Library microfilm of Sharp's manuscripts. In addition, there are transcriptions of three songs from Library of Congress recordings made by Jane Gentry's daughter, Maud Long; two supplementary ballad texts where Sharp only noted music or a single stanza; and "Jennie Jenkins," a third song, not collected by Sharp. "Jennie Jenkins," according to Smith, is the only song Gentry deliberately taught her daughter. Smith's discussion of these genres presents a good sense of the contexts of Gentry's performances and applies some important basic folklore scholarship to the texts.

Special strengths of this book are Smith's voice and vision. Smith, herself a singer and Madison County resident, loves the songs and memory of Jane Gentry. Her writing reflects that love and fascination, and readers—particularly people who know Smith—will delight in and profit from that pleasant, loving voice.

Some regional scholars will point out the need for more critical interrogation of the cultural studies and political implications of Gentry's role, its place in the on-

Books Worth Mentioning

Anemones by Elizabeth Howard (Memphis, Tenn.: Grandmother Earth Creations, 1998; $8.95 paper).

A New Pleiade: Selected Poems by Seven American Poets (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1998; $39.95 hardcover, $18.95 paper).

A Wild Kentucky Garden: Poems & Essays by Rebecca Bailey (Ashland, Ky.: Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1998; $9.95 paper).

From My Highest Hill: Carolina Mountain Folks by Olive Tilford Dargan (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1925; rpt. 1998; photographs by Bayard Wootten, introduction by Anna Shannon Elfenbein, afterword by Jonathan Morrow; $22.50 paper).

Hell and Ohio: Stories of Southern Appalachia by Chris Holbrook (Frankfort, Ky.: Gnomon, 1995; $13.50 paper).

Jean Ritchie's Swapping Song Book by Jean Ritchie (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2000; $14.95 paper).

Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture by Charles Joyner (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1999; $49.95 hardcover, $19.95 paper).

The Keepers: Mountain Folk Holding on to Old Skills and Talents by Robert Isbell (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Blair, 1999; with photographs by Arthur Tilley; $16.95 paper).

Tough Customers and Other Stories: Tales from Tennessee & Southern Appalachia by Mary Bozeman Hodges (Ashland, Ky.: Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1999; introduction by Gurney Norman; $9.95 paper).

—Sandra L. Ballard

going popular and scholarly representations of the Hicks-Harmon traditions, and the perpetuation of Gentry's spotless reputation. But Smith's study does offer a richly detailed investigation of Gentry's role as tradition bearer, family leader, supporter of the Dorland-Bell Institute, and entertaining host at Sunnybank. Readers interested in Gentry, the Jack tales, the history of the study of the ballad, or the cultural milieu of Hot Springs during an important time in Appalachian regional history will profit from consulting Smith's vision of Gentry — a vision colored by her experience as a singer.

Smith has also developed vignettes from her book into an engaging one-act "monodrama," in which she impersonates Gentry. Now touring through the Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre, *A Mountain Riddle* depicts Jane Gentry reminiscing and singing at home in 1916, right after her encounters with Sharp. In it, Smith presents Gentry wrestling with the decision of accepting Irving Bacheller's invitation to come north for a visit, a decisive moment in her representation as "the happiest person [Bacheller] ever knew."

— Thomas McGowan

Thomas McGowan, professor of English at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., is past editor of the North Carolina Folklore Journal.

Creeker: A Woman's Journey
by Linda Scott DeRosier
University Press of Kentucky
Lexington, Ky. - 1999
$27.50 (hardcover)

For Linda Scott DeRosier, growing up in rural Appalachia was a time of family closeness — a time of working together and laughing together. Although she left home at 17 to attend college, she remained strongly attached to her roots. Her memoir is a frank study of her family and her place in it.

The author grew up as a "creeker" on Two-Mile Creek in Eastern Kentucky, a small "hillbilly" settlement which revered kinship, practiced open-door hospitality, and possessed a strong sense of community. Her parents were a study in contrasts. A carpenter who worked in the coal mines, her daddy was a man who enjoyed life and people, and they in turn enjoyed being around him. His wife was the center of his circumscribed world. DeRosier's mother, on the other hand, was vastly different from the other mothers: She smoked, wore short shorts and lipstick, drove a car, and was a voracious reader. Before she married, she taught school — no degree required — but gave it up afterward. Later in life, says DeRosier, she became a hypochondriac, a culmination of "a lifelong inability to find contentment." In her daughter's opinion, this was due to the fact that she had "formidable intelligence and absolutely nowhere to focus it."

Alcoholism was prevalent among the men in DeRosier's background. Her uncles periodically went "drinking and sworping" for anywhere from 24 hours to a full week. Women never indulged in this behavior, probably because of their strong Baptist upbringing, surmises the author. When DeRosier asked one uncle why he went off on binges, he replied, "A young man with juice in him has got to have some way of getting it out of his system." Eventually, all of her uncles quit cold turkey when they got saved and joined the church. Therefore, she wonders why so many people today consider alcoholism a disease.

When young, the author never expected to live anywhere but on Two-Mile Creek, cooking, straightening, and "nussing" babies. Unpopular in school but very smart, DeRosier skipped from the first to the third grade. In high school, she was offered a number of college scholarships. So she did go on to college, later earning her master's degree in education at Harvard University and her doctorate in psychology at the University of Kentucky. DeRosier, who served as the first director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, is now a professor of psychology at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Mont.

What caused her life to follow such a different path from the one she thought she'd take? It could have been that she had a mother who was "different" or a family whose members read widely as a reward for getting their work done. Or it could have been because she had the chance to witness the fortunes of one or two relatives who moved to the city and became financially successful. Probably all of these factors came into play. Influenced by her mother and Grandma Emmy, she acquired folk wisdom, independence, vanity, and a love of reading.

Because of her fierce attachment to her hillbilly identity, she held onto her accent which, she says, "is too often mistakenly seen as an indication of lower intelligence." She feels her accent is an advantage in the classroom because her students might think that if someone who talks as she does can make it, they should certainly be able to do the same.

Proud of her roots and deeply attached to her home community and all it stood for, DeRosier paints a warm, loving picture of her childhood and the "creekers" back home. Experience, she feels, does not shape our attitudes. Our attitudes shape our experiences. With her attitude, she was destined to succeed. *Creeker* is an engaging, entertaining, enjoyable read.

— Winifred Hazucha

Winifred Hazucha is a retired teacher who lives in Arlington Heights, Ill. During the last 12 years of her career, she worked with children with learning disabilities. She has been married 51 years, has four grown children, and three grandchildren.

Rocky Mountain College Public Relations

Linda Scott DeRosier's life has taken her on an unexpected path, far away from home.

Beekeeper

From where I tend the hives I gaze on foothills
lolling and complacent, fat with haze
of cities' dreaming, swollen tongues of smoke

where Yankee mills, squatting in foetid creeks,
churn thick our native currents, slow the local
plash of speech till only highlanders

& whiskey men still drink the silver run
come terse & cold through rock, through lively sleeves,
of moss, to burble at these feet & fresh

this throat, my head sunned-through with pain
of ridges, waters, dialects, the land
I walk Kentucky land the whole way up

till sky leaps down on me, the stones about
to sing, the bees soar into eloquent fire,
the stands ablaze but unconsumed, & far

from men's activities the sweet sap deeps,
the pale combs glisten with their dark cargoes
just as long ago, before the war,

before they bent & broke us down to scratch
our bread from iron clay & red as blood—
but not much longer, since I solved the riddle

NSA men chew on round the clock
in high-tech, secret labs out west somewhere,
they'd hunt me if they knew: I broke fate's code,

laid open space-time's layered hive to gaze
through shells of pain, the sun deep in my skull
a screaming door through which I dare to step:

& Shiloh Church lies smoking, shattered trees
& dusklight, saying *Listen, boys. I know*
how we can win this war, I know a way

to manufacture all the bullets you
will need, real bullets, boys, now tell me where
to find the General, 'cause the moon stays with me

all night in the valley of the spiders,
boys, the valley where I see your bodies
torn & soaked, & unavenged— Ah! General,

how it throbs like far artillery
behind my eyes, I'm ugly, Sir, I know,
but came to help, since history says you lost,

but there's whole other histories, other fates
we're free to choose, now ain't that right? trust me!
for what I take in hand I bring to pass:

I'll give you bullets buzzing round their heads
& striking without mercy, swarming down
to draw a dark, sweet nectar from their flesh—

—John Crutchfield

John Crutchfield grew up in Boone, N.C., and now lives in Chapel Hill, N.C., where he makes his living as a teacher, musician, handyman, and member of the Blue Shift Theatre Ensemble.

East Tennessee State University is one of 46 institutions in the Tennessee Board of Regents system, the seventh largest system of higher education in the nation. The Tennessee Board of Regents is the governing board for this system which is comprised of six universities, 14 community colleges, and 26 area technology centers. The TBR system enrolls 80 percent of all Tennessee students attending public institutions of higher education.
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Phyllis Gallagher

Phyllis Gallagher

The Skocik Family comes home every year to Ashland in Appalachian Pennsylvania for a reunion. Shaina and Kira Skocik of Fountain Springs, Penn., share some sisterly humor, while Henry Skocik, Malvern, Penn., Rose Skocik, Mt. Carmel, Penn., and Val Wiley, York, Penn., catch up on the past year's events. The anthracite coalfield area of Northeastern Pennsylvania is populated by many families of Eastern European origin who contributed to the distinct dialect of the region described by Christine Goldbeck in "Speaking the 'Speak" (p. 14).

NOW & THEN

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